

Art Review:

Issue 48 £5.00

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March 2011

Christian Viveros-Fauné:
Is put out by art's tawdry award ceremonies

J.J. Charlesworth:
Wonders why we're burying our heads in the past

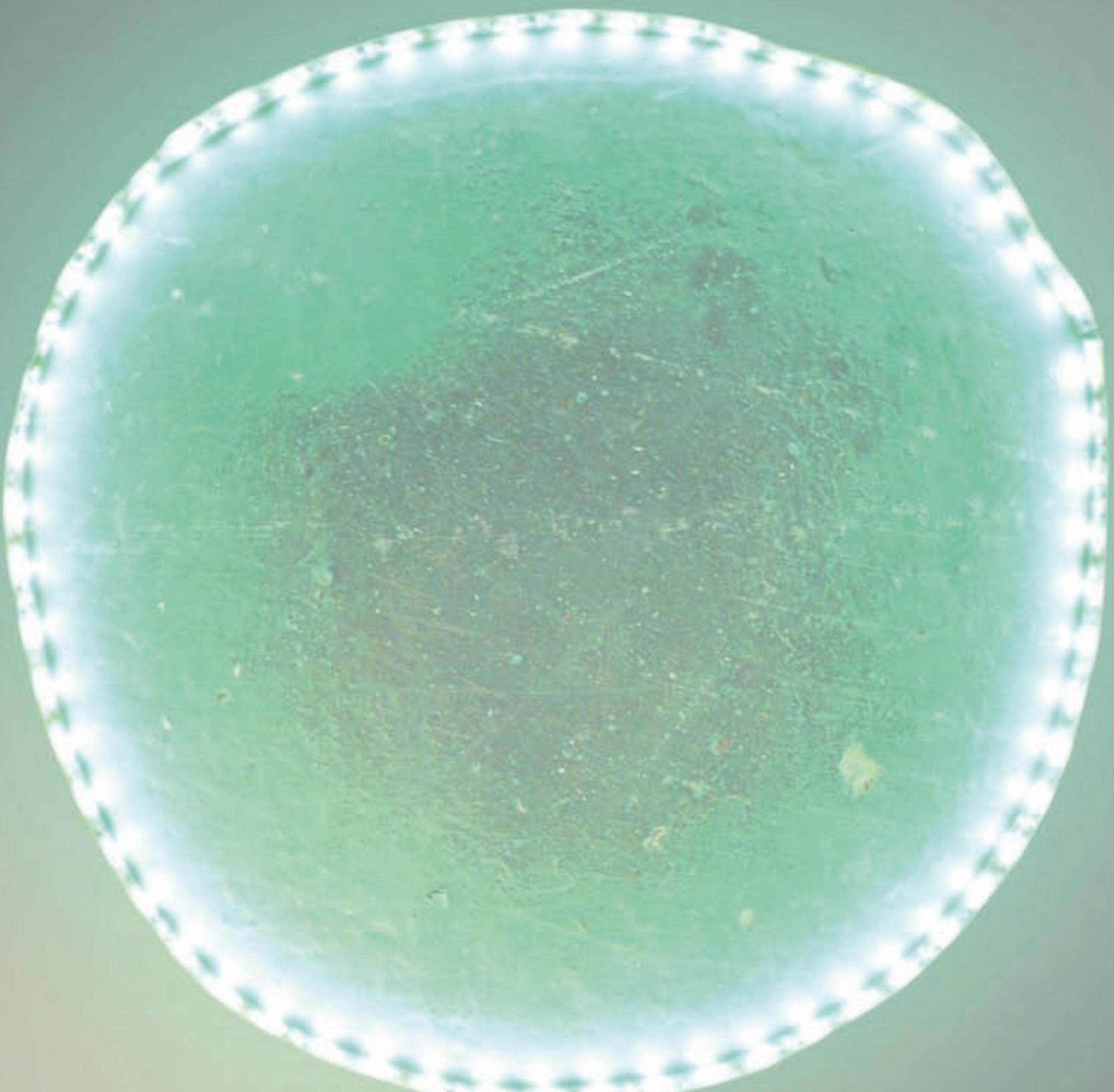
Brian Dillon:
Assesses the legacy of John Berger

Sam Jacob:
Ponders the true value of money

Hettie Judah:
Sticks the knives in

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Plus HAROON MIRZA
Brigitte Waldach and Pliny the Elder





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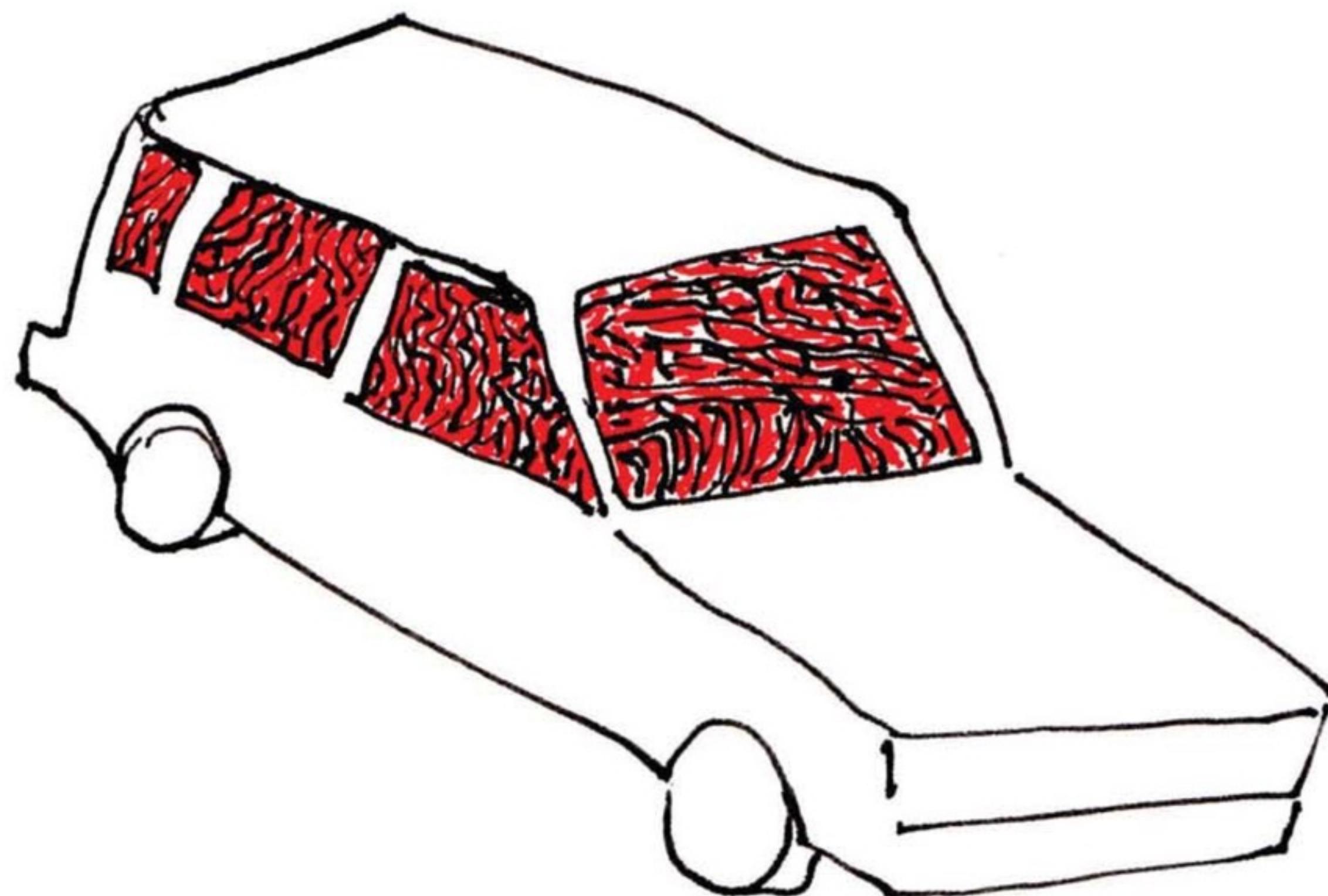
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CONTENTS

MARCH 2011

Cover by: HAROON MIRZA

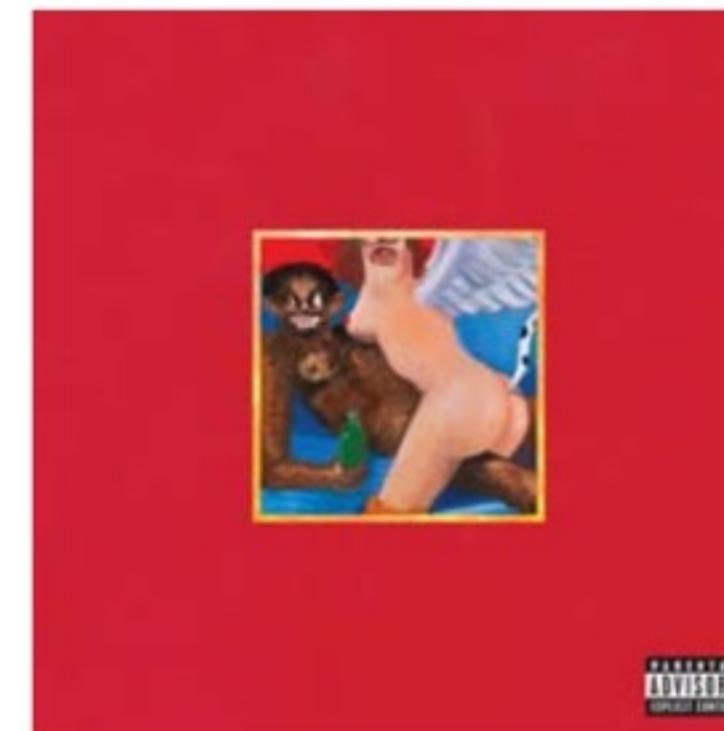


DISPATCHES 29

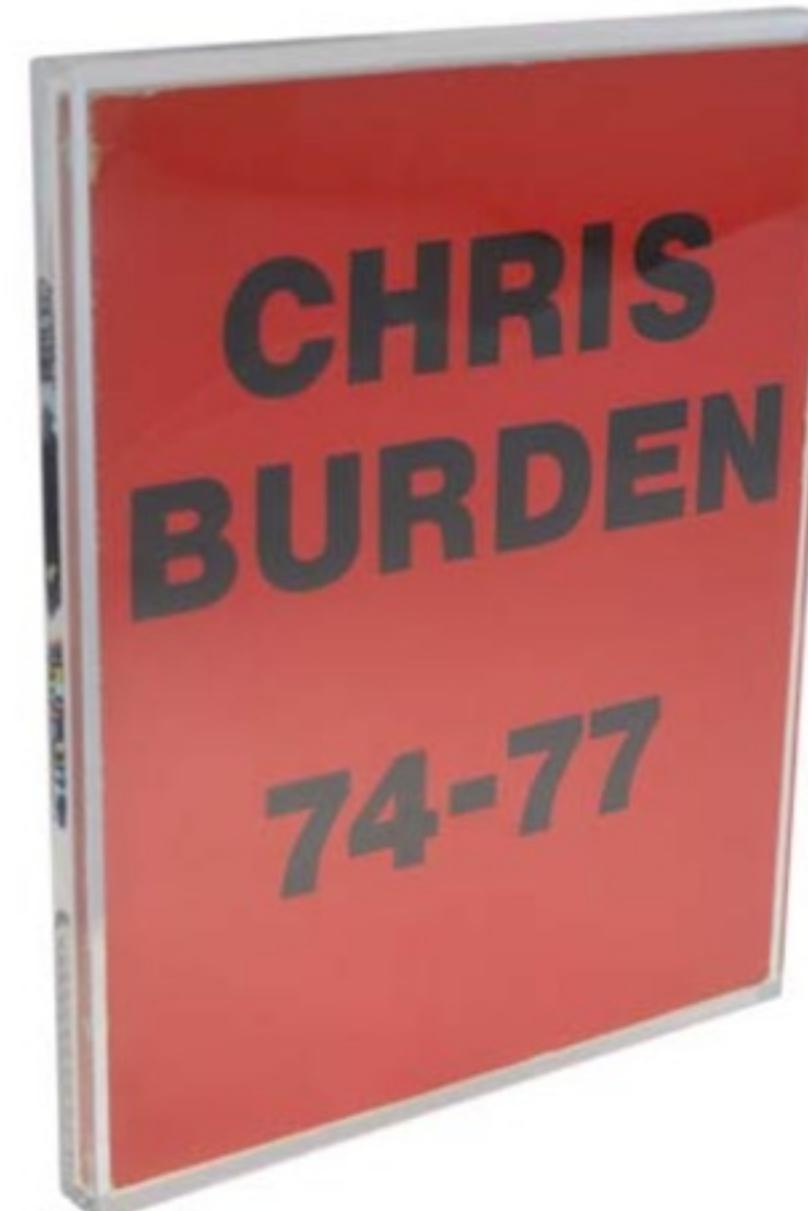
Snapshot: Darren Almond **Now See This:** George Condo, Michael Sailstorfer, Nathaniel Mellors, Jutta Koether, Lindsay Seers, 3rd Singapore Biennial, Matthew Brannon, Katja Strunz, Henry Taylor **Columns:** Marie Darrieussecq on analysing the *Mona Lisa*; Paul Gravett on the bleak but whimsical work of William Goldsmith; Raimar Stange sees art in bars and bookshops as a break from Berlin's commercialisation; Joshua Mack says museums must learn from social media **The Free Lance:** Christian Viveros-Fauné doesn't hold back in his evaluation of the 2010 Art Awards **London:** **Calling:** J.J. Charlesworth calls for the end of retro **Northern Exposure:** Maria Lind looks for new ways to play **Looked Over:** Brian Dillon delves into John Berger's backlist **The Painted Word:** Nigel Cooke says the hip, to the hop, ya don't shock **The Shape of Things:** Sam Jacob on the colour of money **Design:** Knives out for Hettie Judah **Top Five:** The pick of shows to see this month as selected by Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson **A New Concise Reference Dictionary:** From 'fable' to 'fustian', defined by Neal Brown **Consumed:** Naoki Kawamoto's clutch bag, Other Criteria's rare books, Liam Gillick's picture disc, Tom Godfrey's *Marbled Reams*, Mark Bradford's spoken-word LP, Artists Space's annual print portfolio, Martin Creed's new single, beer by Brook & Black **Digested:** Tell Me What You Want, What You Really, Really Want; The Deconstructive Impulse; Architects' Sketchbooks; Christian Waldvogel: Earth Extremes; Nancy Spero: The Work; WassinkLundgren: Tokyo, Tokyo **Great Critics and Their Ideas:** Matthew Collings talks vomit, slaves and Modern British Sculpture with Pliny the Elder



34



53



55



59

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News

International art, design and architecture news, updated every day, as it happens

First View

Joshua Mack visits the 3rd World Festival of Black Arts and Cultures, Dakar, and takes in The Avant-Garde of 'Nihonga' 1938-1949 at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; Laura McLean-Ferris watches Sofia Coppola's *Somewhere*; Oliver Basciano goes to see the Toneelgroep Amsterdam's *Antonioni Project*



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CONTENTS

MARCH 2011

FEATURES

HAROON MIRZA 68

The Sheffield-based artist discusses both blurring and defining the lines between music and sculpture with *Martin Herbert*

INTOXICATIONS 74

Berlin-based Brigitte Waldach presents the second in a series of artist interventions in the pages of *ArtReview*

FUTURE GREATS 81

Moving targets: a selection of artists who have been flying below the radar but are now showing up as blips on the screens of **artists**: *Dara Birnbaum, Nigel Cooke, Ryan Gander, Susan Hefuna, Sarah Morris, Heidi Specker, Diana Thater; curators*: *Adam Budak, Elena Filipovic, Andrew Hunt, Stefan Kalmár, Jamie Kenyon, Kathy Noble, Beatrix Ruf, Bart van der Heide, Gavin Wade; & critics*: *Oliver Basciano, J.J. Charlesworth, Tyler Coburn, Martin Herbert, Laura McLean-Ferris, Jonathan T.D. Neil, Chris Sharp, Christian Viveros-Fauné*

REAR VIEW

REVIEWS 119

Philippe Parreno, *Aware*, João Penalva, Adam Dant, Thomas Houseago, *Childish Things*, Anselm Kiefer, *The West at Sunset*, *Planet of Slums*, Emily Roysdon, Anthony Pearson, Julien Bismuth, Christopher Orr, *Neo-Barbarism*, Cosima von Bonin, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Absalon, *L'Art Reproduit*

BOOKS 138

By Nightfall, Palo Alto, The Nightmare of Participation, Alec Soth's America

THE STRIP 142

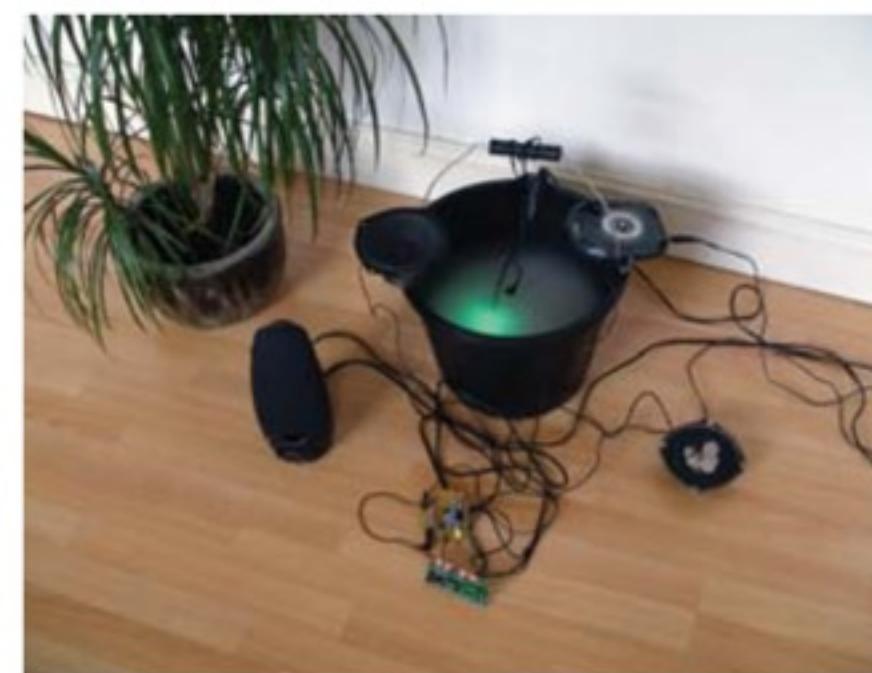
William Goldsmith on the lost gloves of Ystov

ON THE TOWN 144

Ricky Swallow at Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London, and Chicks on Speed at Kate MacGarry, London

OFF THE RECORD 146

A drunken decision costs us dearly as *Gallery Girl* is let loose on two art fairs: one in India, the other on the Net.



71



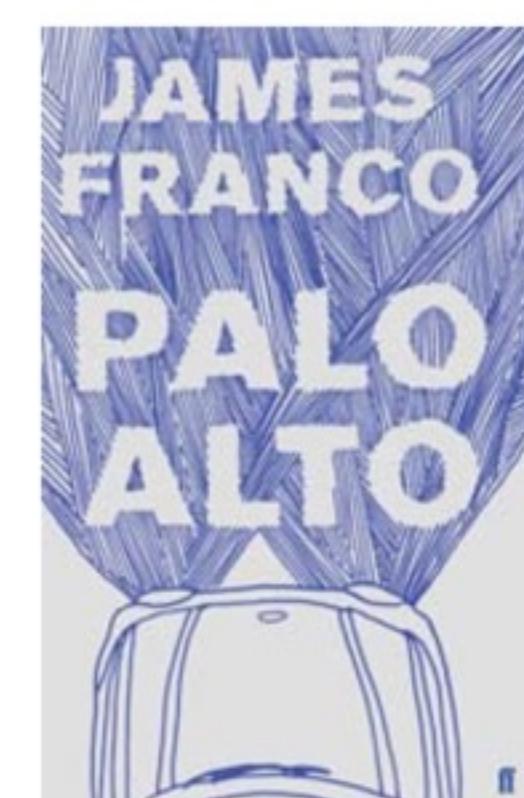
81



81



130

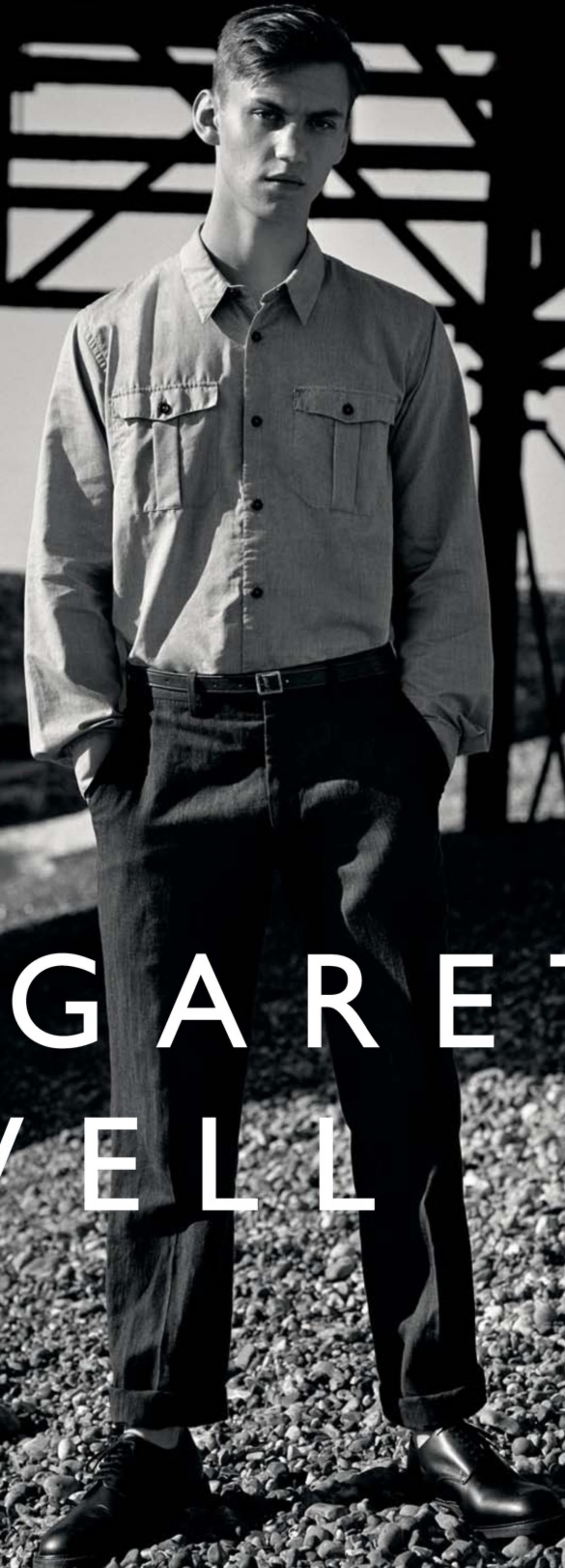


139



144

MARGARET HOWELL



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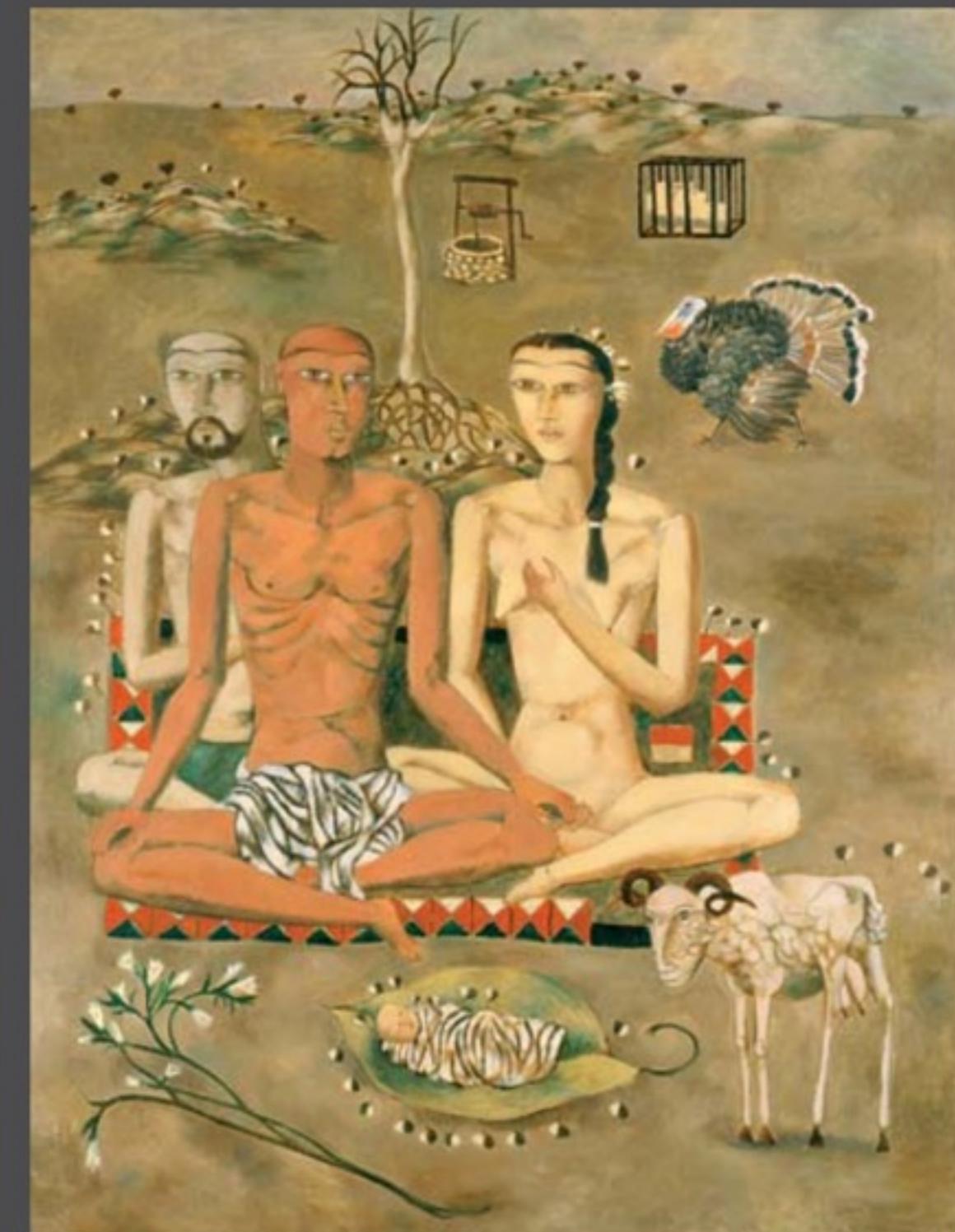


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MARCH 2011

HAROON MIRZA

This month's cover was made for *ArtReview* by Haroon Mirza, an artist based in Sheffield and London. He recently won the Northern Art Prize and is currently exhibiting in the British Art Show 7, which is on view at the Hayward Gallery, London, until 17 April, and at Lisson Gallery, London, where his solo exhibition is on view until 19 March. Forthcoming is a solo touring exhibition which opens at Camden Arts Centre, London, in October before touring to Spike Island, Bristol, and the Hepworth, Wakefield.

BRIGITTE WALDACH

Brigitte Waldach is an artist born and based in Berlin. She has exhibited internationally: in New York, Copenhagen, São Paulo, Los Angeles, Sydney, Barcelona and Berlin. Her large-format, sometimes-multipart drawings are made, primarily, in the colour red. The artist creates a complex sense of space in her drawings, which also feature figures from popular and high culture who are sometimes accompanied by context-specific quotes from literature and philosophical works. Waldach creates mesmerising visual puzzles that oscillate between our collective cultural memory and individual perception.

BRIAN DILLON

Brian Dillon is a writer based in Canterbury. His novella, *Sanctuary*, is published in May by Sternberg Press, and *Ruins* in September by Whitechapel Gallery/MIT Press. A collection of his essays, *Culture & Curiosity*, will be published in 2012.

MARIA LIND

Maria Lind is a curator and critic based in Stockholm, where she is director of Tensta Konsthall. From 2008 to 2010 she was director of the graduate programme at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, and prior to that she was the director of Iaspis in Stockholm and Kunstverein München. She has also been curator at Moderna Museet, Stockholm, and cocurator of Manifesta 2. She is the coeditor of several books, including *Curating with Light Luggage* (2005) and *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art* (2008). She was the 2009 recipient of the Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement. *Selected Maria Lind Writing* was published last year by Sternberg Press.

SUSANNAH THOMPSON

Susannah Thompson is a Glasgow-based writer and art historian. She works as a lecturer in contemporary art and visual culture in the School of Art at Edinburgh College of Art. Her research interests include twentieth-century and contemporary Scottish art and experimental/creative modes of art criticism, specifically writing by visual artists. She is currently involved in a research project examining the theories and practices surrounding 'expanded painting'.





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MARCH



snapshot DARREN ALMOND
'Three Trunks'

NOW SEE THIS

words MARTIN HERBERT



The stars are aligning for **George Condo** (*New Museum, New York, to 8 May, www.newmuseum.org*): a flattering *New Yorker* profile, an album-cover commission from Kanye West (who apparently requested something that would get banned) and, most emphatically, this fulsome touring exhibition. Entitled *Mental States* and featuring more than 80 paintings from the last 28 years, it ought to clarify that the New Hampshire-born maven of bright grotesquerie is both a brilliant oddity and a prescient precursor: as Calvin Tomkins has suggested, there'd be no John Currin without Condo; Dana Schutz owes him majorly too. Prepare for popeyed Queen Elizabeth IIs, malevolent butlers, skewed faces with multiple rows of teeth and nods aplenty to Bugs Bunny's turn as the crazed conductor 'Leopold' (surely the presiding physiognomic influence on the painter's later works) – in all, a grand display of that contradictory impacting of emotions that Condo calls 'psychological cubism'.

Constructive derangement underwrites the work of several other artists exhibiting this month.



Michael Sailstorfer (*S.M.A.K., Ghent, 26 March – 3 July, www.smak.be*) has spent a decade poetically undoing everyday objects: in the video *Untitled (Lohma)* (2008), footage of a metal building exploding in a remote field is manipulated and reversed, its walls seeming to bulge and contract as if the inanimate edifice were breathing. The thirty-something German artist stacks his work with reversals and binaries – urban/rural, live/dead – and we're promised that'll continue here: 'strange odours and street sounds' may well

make guest appearances. **Nathaniel Mellors**

(*ICA, London, 9 March – 15 May, www.ica.org.uk*), meanwhile, correlates language and power before pointedly detaching one from the other via serious attention to nonsense. (His films are studded with unhinged authority figures.) For the ICA, the English artist brings together the four parts of his extended video series *Ourhouse* (2010–), a sort of avantist sitcom strewn with non sequiturs; one of the artist's animatronic sculptures, *Hippy Dialectics (Ourhouse)* (2010); and a garland of weekly film screenings, talks and live music from acts on the record label Mellors coruns, Junior Aspirin. Because it's not enough just to put on an exhibition these days.



Paris

One Tuesday a year, when the Louvre is closed to the public, white-gloved hands take down the *Mona Lisa*. During these maintenance operations, Philippe Walter and his team from the Centre for Research and Restoration of French Museums analyse the most famous painting in the world, using fluorescent X-rays. This technique, which sounds like the science fiction of my childhood, is not meant to teleport the *Mona Lisa* into an episode of *Star Trek*, but to look at her different layers of transparency.

Fluorescent X-rays allow for a non-destructive analysis. It is indeed out of the question to remove the slightest fragment or micron from the painting, "Even from the sides," the amused researcher tells me. The machine Walter has perfected is portable: it can bombard the *Mona Lisa* with rays in the room she is exhibited in. The atoms react to the blasting and give off X-rays with a measurable quantity of energy, which allows the chemical composition of the painting's matter to be determined – iron, calcium, and especially manganese. Leonardo concocted at least four varieties of black pigment. Seven of his paintings have been analysed: their faces in particular, where his *sfumato* – hazy, smoky shading – is so characteristic. Walter has established a sort of Da Vinci Code of the Renaissance polymath's palette, used for expert evaluation. He has revealed the extreme fineness of the glazes (between one and two micrometres) and contributed to studies of the shading, involving up to 40 layers, that Leonardo used to obtain his unique blacks. "It could take the painting a month to dry, which tells us a lot about da Vinci's studio: he painted between moments devoted to other forms of research."

This material approach in the full sense of the term may seem incongruent to supporters of an art that depends more on place than on the object. In Darian Leader's book *Stealing the Mona Lisa* (2002), the author relates the extraordinary flow of visitors who came to look at the empty spot after the painting was stolen in 1911. "The act of removing it brought out the gap between the element and the place that art has been exploring ever since, from Malevich to Andre. Researchers are always trying to do scientific analyses of the painting, as if to find the 'x' that makes it so intriguing. (...) The key isn't the painting, but the place the painting finds itself in."

And yet the two approaches are not incompatible. Astrophysicists, who explain to us that stars are only merging clusters of gas, still make us dream, and Philippe Walter, the Jules Verne of the Louvre, and his machine transport us to Mona Lisa's galaxy. He reminds us that she is made of atoms, not only of stories and fantasy. Her mystery is also linked to her abyssal materiality. Mona Lisa exists just like black holes do: true to life. Isn't that what the Louvre's public comes to verify from the four corners of the earth: her stupefying *physical* reality?

words MARIE DARRIEUSSECQ
translated from the French by EMMELENE LANDON

The art/music détente is at least partly due to the postpunk generation (the nascent Condo played in a band, too), and in the first rank of multitaskers in

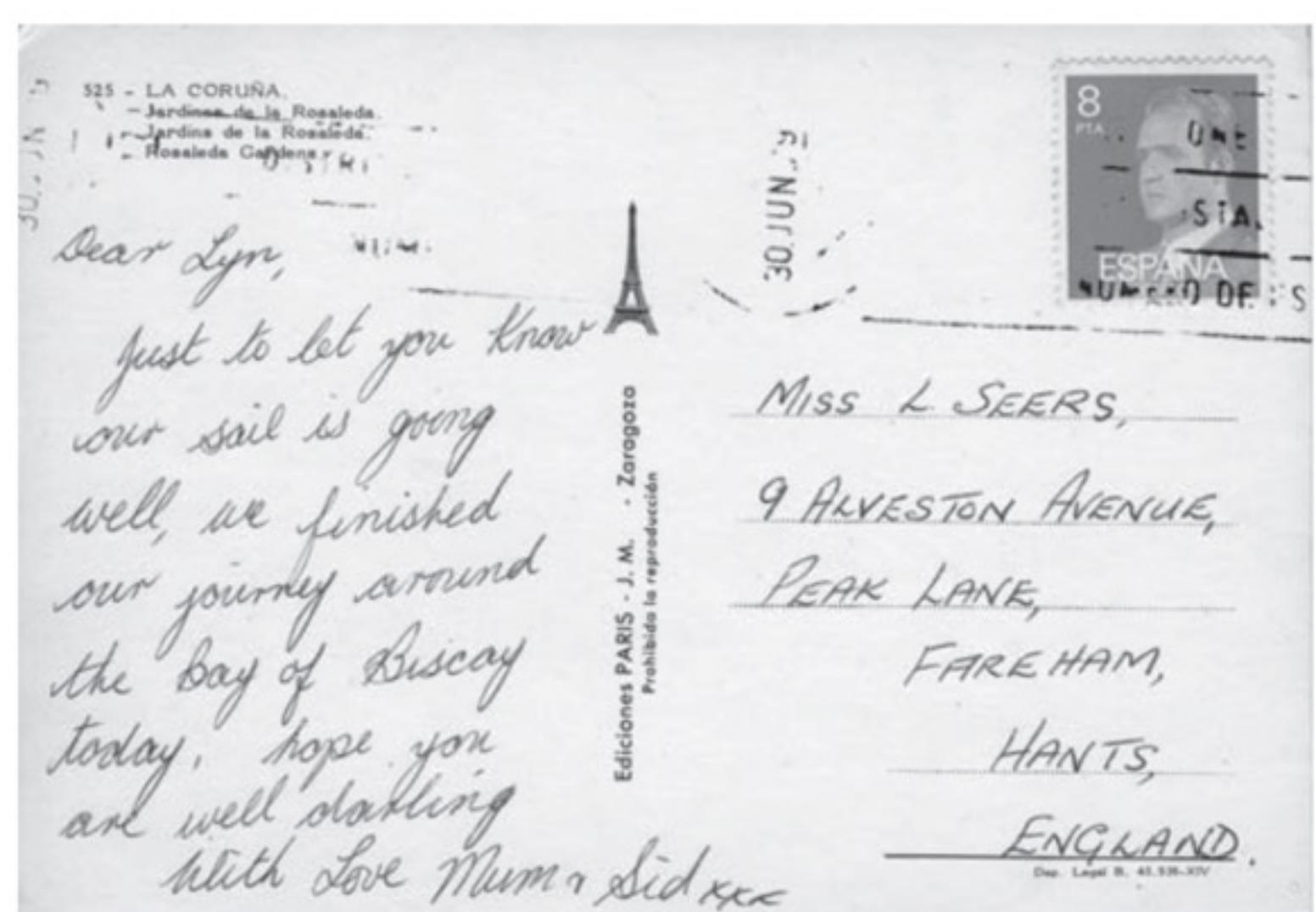
this respect is **Jutta Koether** (*Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 5 March – 24*

April, www.modernamuseet.se), who, now in her early fifties, has long augmented her visual-art practice with work not only as a musician but also as a critic. Here, alongside some 30 of the German's recalcitrant and protean works dating from



2005 onwards – her style ranges from scratchy mirrored works to lyrical sketches to skinny, pendulous wall reliefs – a performance programme features Koether, Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon and Tony Conrad (here listed as a poet, rather than as an artist or an improviser). Visual art isn't quite

encompassing enough for **Lindsay Seers** (*BALTIC, Gateshead, to 12 June, www.balticmill.com*) either. *It has to be this way* is augmented by a 176-page novella by M. Anthony Penwill, available in the gallery. This exhibition finds the Jarman Award-winner adding to an interlocking series of films: here, in a moving-image work set within an installation, Seers picks



William Goldsmith

Whole worlds and even entire universes can spring from the pens and minds of comic artists – after all, the imagination needs no special effects budget. Sometimes, though, a city is more than enough. This is true of William Goldsmith, an upcoming British graphic storyteller born in Athens, who is imagining his own “bleak but whimsical” metropolis named Ystov. Located in an unspecified East European state, Ystov is “translated only very roughly” as Y-Town, its name derived from being founded at the fork of a river. Its buildings and streets provide the linked settings for Goldsmith’s two-page tales about the city’s eccentric citizens, Ystovians, collected as ‘Vignettes of Ystov’.

As non-Ystovians, we begin our wanderings in Ystov somewhat lost, like most foreigners in an alien place. But with each interlocking story, each different perspective, both the ensemble cast of characters and the city’s landmarks – like the recurring thoroughfare of ‘Tamarisk Utt’ or the Trexlar Tower, a looming bureaucratic edifice which dominates the skyline, festooned with statues of the city’s padded-shouldered president – become incrementally familiar and compose a map of locations and relationships in the mind. To the point where, literally, the penny drops, as a labourer atop the Trexlar Tower accidentally lets go of a coin whose plummet proves lethal. A tiny moment or a bit-player waiting in the wings in one story can take centre stage in another. The more closely we pay attention, the more a web of interconnections becomes clear.

Goldsmith, a 2009 graduate of Glasgow School of Art, developed his ‘Vignettes’ while still a student there, drawn to comics by “their condensing of information, layers of story that you can linger over and return to”. Ystov grew partly from his visits to Hungary and Slovakia, but also from his own quirky urban narratives. “There was some level of absurdity in them, in the nose-sculptor, the debris-cataloguing janitor, or the coincidence-monitoring scientists, an absurdity which could spar well with a faintly authoritarian society that tried to oppress it.” This issue’s Strip, for example, exposes some young Ystovians’s trade in misplaced gloves.

In his striking graphic novel debut, Goldsmith’s typography and design derive from a kind of hand-drawn, humanised Constructivism, while 1970s Soviet magazines triggered ideas, as did Bruce Chatwin’s final novel *Utz* (1988) and Jan Svankmajer’s film *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996). Awash in subtle greys blended with typically subdued colour accenting, Goldsmith’s comics shine via his texts, concise and precise, delighting in the choicest word. He is a paper architect, building his city story by story.

William Goldsmith’s Vignettes from Ystov is published by Jonathan Cape on 3 March in the UK

words PAUL GRAVETT

up narratives established in earlier work – of the artist’s missing stepsister, Seers’s mother’s vexed relationship to her family and her husband’s involvement in diamond smuggling – with memory and image pulling against each other, and the personal entangling with a wider political history.

In Singapore, meanwhile, it’s open house – that

being the title of the third **Singapore Biennale (13 March – 15 May, www.singaporebiennale.org)**.

Don’t worry, though, you’ll still have to pay for tickets (plus there’s a merchandising outlet under construction: ‘Shop at the Biennale – until you drop, guaranteed!’ says the website). What *Open House* addresses – in the context of this 150-work, 63-artist, four-venue show, curated by Matthew Ngui, Russell Storer and Trevor Smith – is the practice of Singaporeans opening their homes to others on public holidays, ported into this context via the idea of art relating to daily transactions between people. Among the artists aiming to wiggle their work into the format are Candice Breitz, Elmgreen and Dragset, Simon Fujiwara and Ryan Trecartin: expect lots of specially commissioned pieces.



The tartly refined art of **Matthew Brannon**

(Portikus, Frankfurt, to 3 April, www.portikus.de)

has its sociable side: in the wipe-clean retro graphics of his screenprints and installations, the American artist summons a world that, superficially, feels partially sourced in (and predates the vogue for) a *Mad Men*-style ideal of 1960s luxe. But the prints in particular come laced with sour yet ambiguous texts that address a decadent, very contemporary, yet nostalgic society with a jaundiced eye, injecting them with a sense of imminent collapse. Here, the focus is on a mixture of prints, wallpaper and a sound piece, *Gag* (2010), whose title’s double meaning won’t be accidental for an artist as attuned to language as Brannon.

Berlin

Berlin is full of art, overflowing with it. In the last 15 years, the number of galleries has risen from some 40 to around 600; new art museums and numerous alternative spaces have opened along the Spree; all the larger banks have art collections. Even my local travel agent does art now – every two months, a new show of paintings from the brand 'wannabe Doig', plus an opening with home baking and chamber music. Of course. Business is booming. Years ago the Berlin painter Michel Majerus and I had planned to show his paintings and photographs at that travel agent's: art for ordinary people, completely free of hyperventilating art hype. It was a serious project, very close to our hearts. But then Majerus, whose work is shown these days in museums all over the world, lost his life, far too young, in a plane crash in Luxembourg.

Nevertheless, showing art in multiple-use venues offers one of the few escape routes from Berlin's overcommercialised art market. In Mitte, for instance, Barbara Wien's bookshop has also functioned as a gallery for some years now. On the ground floor there are art journals, catalogues, books on art theory and, most important, treasures of conceptual art and Fluxus: records, editions, prints and drawings by artists ranging from Lawrence Weiner to Dorothy Iannone. On the upper floor Wien and her colleague Wilma Lukatsch put on exhibitions, with artists such as Tomas Schmit, Jimmie Durham and Haegue Yang. They also have openings, of course, but unfortunately without the home baking and chamber music.

Another variant of these hybrid art venues is the Forgotten Bar Project in Kreuzberg. It's not just a bar – at the weekends there are also art exhibitions for one night only. Discreetly directed by Tjorg Douglas Beer, there are presentations with artists such as Monica Bonvicini, Rainald Goetz and Harun Farocki. But at these one-night stands, unknown artists also have the chance to show their work to the collected Berlin art scene. And part of the value of the Forgotten Bar Project is that, amid the venue's faded charms, every so often an artist takes the floor whose work is not yet on show in the galleries around town. Even if the crush of people and the overly jolly atmosphere make it hard to fully appreciate the art, at least artists who have yet to make a breakthrough can appear here. And if you are able to frequent these nocturnal events, you can glean something of an overview of young art in Berlin – which is not normally that easy, in view of the endlessly fluctuating nature of the wider, distinctly international art scene.

By the way, my dentist is the sister of a well-known German artist. And that doesn't just mean that there is good art on show in her practice: you can also pay with more of the same.

words **RAIMAR STANGE**
translated from the German by **FIONA ELLIOTT**



Katja Strunz (Almine Rech, Brussels, 25 February – 26 March, www.alminerech.com)

is another artist with one eye on the time before she was born and the other on the present (something that barely needs saying any more about contemporary art practices). Strunz's wall-based, origami-folded geometric reliefs look at once nostalgic (Robert Smithson is a conscious reference) and ominously stranded; more recently, she's essayed object-based installation, as with assemblages and instruments intended to suggest a kind of delicately abstracted brass band that is at once present and not.



Henry Taylor (*Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, 19 March – 23 April, www.blumandpoe.com*),

by sharp contrast, makes art like someone with a rhetorical animosity towards nicety – but again, with a focused attention to what was and what is. The surfaces of his paintings, as *Artforum*'s Nick Stillman has remarked, are 'sludgy, pasty, and crusty', and riven with sudden lacunae; only recognised of late, the fifty-something Californian's sculptures (employing cigarette packets, high-strength-beer cartons and archive photographs, and recalling David Hammons in a baroque mood) look pulled together with casual urgency. Taylor's subject is race, served confrontationally raw, in vivid colour and yet with an odd sense of immobility – here's a bereted Huey Newton on a throne, clasping rifle and spear; here's a black figure strapped facedown onto the lit coals of a barbecue; here's a seated black man who, the title says, has been Tasered (2005) – and here, in all, are history and the contemporary folded together in brightly discontented ways.



New York

Because of deadlines and holidays, I wrote this piece in December, during a week when *The New Yorker* featured a profile of Eli Broad and the *FT Weekend* one of Mark Zuckerberg (who was named *Time* magazine's 'Person of the Year' shortly after). Both men, billionaires several times over, made their fortunes in social media: Broad, seventy-seven, by building tract homes, the basis of postwar US communities, and Zuckerberg, twenty-six, by building Facebook.

Broad, a megacollector who is determined to locate a private museum alongside Disney Hall and MOCA in downtown LA, is quoted in *The New Yorker* as saying that 'Los Angeles has become the contemporary-art capital of the world'. While my native New York chauvinism baulks, in actuality the artworld today has no centre. This circumstance is not an issue of geography – one could argue that Miami Beach was the premier city when I wrote this – but an outcome of the platform from which Zuckerberg is raking it in, the Internet.

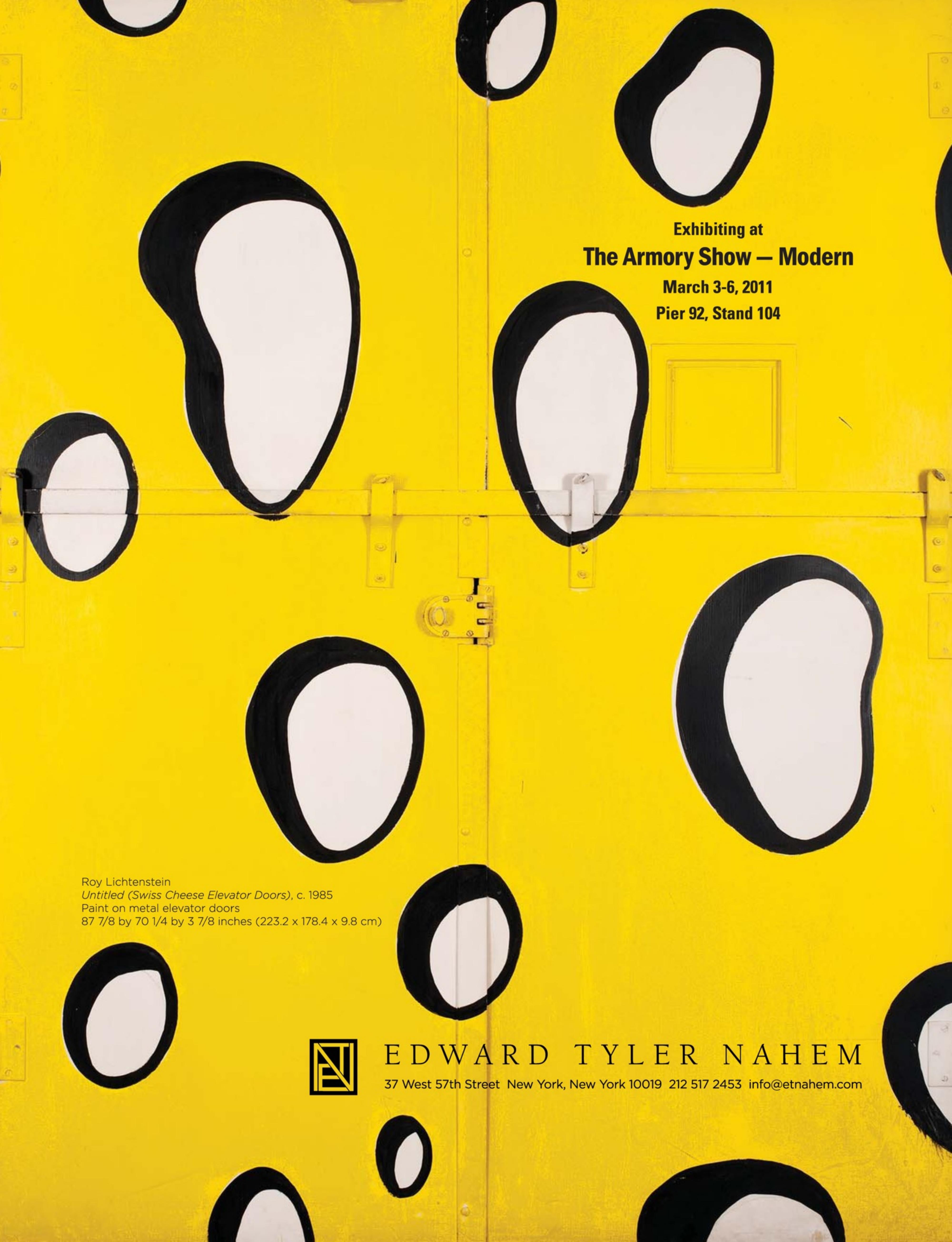
Notice how many museumgoers today are plugged into Acoustiguides or are snapping stuff with their cellphones. Go to YouTube and check out Ryan Trecartin, whose videos exploit the slipperiness of online identity. The takeaway is not just that technology is changing how content is made and consumed, but that art is a social medium. As a means of personal and communal expression, it always has been.

Zuckerberg's brilliance is in understanding that all things are social: hence his ambition, as discussed in the *FT*, to transform Facebook from a destination into *the* interface and *the* transfer point between the personal and the public. The information members record on their pages and a record of the sites they access through Facebook will be used to help other companies tailor and target their marketing to individual preferences. Through the social, everything becomes personal.

It's tempting to think of private museums as Facebook pages for wealthy collectors. But for Broad, the social seems built on an older model: a man's home is his castle. Hence he envisions a standalone place housing his collection. Media and education programmes will be outsourced to other institutions to reduce costs.

If Zuckerberg's analysis is correct, however, museums will have to cater to visitor preferences rather than just reflect the vision of founding patrons if they are to compete with other choices on an expanding menu of entertainment options. An institution's value will lie not just in its collection, but also in its ability to package it; Broad, and others with similar plans for their own spaces, may be erecting themselves old-fashioned mausoleums.

words JOSHUA MACK



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Paint on metal elevator doors
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PARTY LIKE IT'S 1929

The 2010 Art Awards: What the New York Artworld Is Really Up To

LIFE IS A CABARET, at least for a reduced group of New York swells. Fresh off private and commercial flights from the art fairs in Miami, they catch sparkling glimpses of themselves in Guy Trebay's *New York Times* society columns (emitting bon mots like real-estate mogul Aby Rosen's gem that fair shopping helps megacollectors 'socialize with people at their same level') while encouraging masses of hangers-on to share the good life the old-fashioned way: vicariously.

Despite the fact that we know that art society – like the rest of the country – has recently split unequally into haves and have-nots, it can be hard to figure out which party to find more loathsome in this twenty-first-century *Gatsby*-inspired fandango: the frantic joiners with noses pressed against the glass, or the fat cats partying like it's 1929. To borrow a maxim from the late Susan Sontag, the artworld, like the real world, can be parcelled according to the following formula: 10 percent of its population is selfish, no matter what, and 10 percent is empathetic. The remaining 80 percent – elbow-throwing, eye-gouging strivers to a person – can be moved in any direction. This helps explain the pathetic fuss kicked up about a recent pseudo art event dolled up as a Hollywood-style prize show. Conceptualised, fetishised and directed by droll art-ironist Rob Pruitt, December's 2010 Art Awards mobilised the artworld's cutthroat nine tenths for yet another bandwagonesque pastiche of Marie Antoinette. If published accounts are to be believed, there was more fun in watching reruns of *Saved by the Bell*.

Heathers-like in its rehearsed contempt for anything save 'popularity', the second iteration of this ill-conceived fundraiser to benefit the Guggenheim Museum and White Columns proved, like much auction-house funny business



ideas from Andy Warhol's 1963 *Sleep* to dangling David Blaine over the Thames in a plastic box). Duplicitous even with itself, this format was soon trumped (by design?) by the New York artworld's dog-eat-dog social Darwinism. According to Artinfo's Andrew Goldstein, 'This time around, the subtleties of this outrageous burlesque of an event may have been lost'. Quoting one of the many artists revolted by the proceedings, Goldstein recorded this unattributed complaint (because the artworld is self-censoring) in his quietly devastating piece: "I'm disgusted by this. I am a serious artist, I go to my studio every day and I make things. This is the last time you'll see me here."

words CHRISTIAN VIVEROS-FAUNE

today, to be a deflating embrace of middlebrow American culture. An event whose grossness is matched only by the cupidity of its invitees – guests were segregated and fed according to levels of wealth and success – the Art Awards pulverised in one night the record for 2010's most craven art show. Previously contested by Bravo's *Work of Art* and the New Museum's detestable exhibition *Skin Fruit*, Pruitt's art-as-celebrity-parade shindig is to art what the *Weekend at Bernie's* franchise has been to filmmaking – regular instalments of camp, corn and sight gags that predictably turn out both hackneyed and witless every time.

Styled according to conventional artworld wisdom, the 2009 Art Awards were originally conceived in the faux-facetious spirit of an 'artwork' (that convenient cover for shit

This sort of 'irony' about the artworld isn't irony any more – it's groupthink. Sophistry of the highest order, the Art Awards present the ideal Wikipedia illustration to accompany Fredric Jameson's definition of postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism – with Kylie Minogue's hindquarters and James Franco's grey teeth thrown in for good measure. Neither irony nor satire – for the latter, look no further than Jon Stewart's 'advocacy satire' and its efficacy in shaming congressional Republicans into passing the 9/11 First Responders health bill – what events like Rob Pruitt's Art Awards provide is the oldest excuse in the book for pompous venality, à la mode stupidity, and having cake and eating it, too. I hope they choke on it.



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Rana Begum, No. 207, Created as a response to her residency in Beirut, 2009

PAST OUT

Time to stop looking back to our future

EITHER I'VE INADVERTENTLY stepped through a time-crack and into the 1940s, or modern British culture is collapsing backwards onto its point of origin, like some kind of dreadful floral-printed, bunting-festooned black hole. So it is that the postwar years of austerity have returned on a wave of vintage feeling, and riding the wave is London's Southbank Centre, which has decided to subject us to a season of retro arts festivities: a rerun of the 1951 Festival of Britain. A landmark of postwar British cultural rebranding, the festival's 60th anniversary is to be marked with four months of throwback fun this spring and summer, casting a net over every aspect of postwar Britishness: The Kinks lead singer Ray Davies is curating a history of the era's pop music, Tracey Emin will be taking over the Hayward for a major back-to-the-1990s career retrospective and 90s design 'guru' Wayne Hemingway will be throwing his *vintage weekend* (avoid it between 29 and 31 July), a 'celebration of creative British cool from the 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s', recasting the South Bank as a 'vintage wonderland'.

Of course, while it may be washing over the artworld only now, the tide of British retro has been growing for a while. Somewhere between the proliferating shops selling 'vintage modern' furniture, the fascination with home baking and tiny fairy cakes, the burlesque revival, Colin Firth spluttering his way through *The King's Speech* (2010) and the bizarre trend for cover versions of pop songs redone as 1940s and 50s jazz or early rock 'n' roll, the logic of retro has been leading inexorably to our immersion in an era in which British identity seemed a lot less fucked up than it is right now. With our 'Keep calm and

carry on' mugs, T-shirts and mouse mats, our weirdly retro-styled coalition government (and its insistent 'we're all in this together' message) and a well-timed royal wedding in the pipeline, 2011 is fast approaching the ground zero of ersatz-cultural-identity delusion: if we all believe hard enough, we can wish a sense of confident nationhood out of thin air. Emin, coming on like a latter-day Vera Lynn, gets into the 'let's pull ourselves together' spirit bigging up the South Bank festivities by declaring that 'people throughout history, in times of great crisis, have turned to the arts to give them solace and to give them companionship, so I think that's what this country definitely needs at the moment. We need a really big party.'

As anyone who has watched the British art scene recently will know, the truth is that much of the public sector in Britain has for years already been tied into a sort of positive-thinking, community-building culture, with the dominant

than a grinding confrontation between the dynamism of internationally inspired avant-garde ambitions and the stuffy parochialism of a conservative, postimperial culture.

Such reliance on past examples and the certainties of historically authentic identity retools retro into an apology for how shit everything is in the present. But at least in its early-1990s incarnation, retro's celebration of the cultural 60s, 70s and 80s dovetailed with the desire of a younger generation to emulate the hedonistic subcultural movements of those decades (mod, glam, disco, New Romantic) rather than becoming the house style for a dogma of austerity and self-restraint. And much current art, though it rarely addresses this cultural mood directly, seems equally hypnotised by the splendours of its own past, struggling to define a way forward through an increasingly unreadable present. Yet sometimes the past offers no solace and no direction, and dwelling there only reinforces the sense of impasse. Where to next? Nobody really knows, but one thing's for sure – we're fast running out of history to repeat.



words J.J. CHARLESWORTH

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PREDETERMINATION was the thing that bugged artist Palle Nielsen the most when he made art history by making an adventure playground for children at Moderna Museet in Stockholm during three weeks in the autumn of 1968. It was conceived in response to the fact that people, including artists, conducted their lives as if they were ants moving in established columns, treating each other habitually and adhering to unchanging norms. An expressed starting point for *The Model: A Model for a Qualitative Society* was the observation that neither children nor adults were doing well in the new housing estates that had sprung up after the Second World War in Scandinavia and elsewhere. Crammed apartments and a sense of alienation, brought about by the advent of television and the physical distance from family and friends, were only some of the problematic aspects of the new living conditions. Conservative mores centred upon nuclear family units were another contributing factor. So instead of letting the kids continue to imitate the life and habits of the adults, in *The Model* Nielsen wanted them to have the chance to 'become themselves': to experience new aspects of their reality through play, in a setting not yet adapted to the energetic activity of children. Does this description of life and understanding of children ring a contemporary bell?

Reading Lars Bang Larsen's brilliant book *The Model: A Model for a Qualitative Society* (1968) (2010) – published by Barcelona's MACBA on the occasion of a donation of documentation and other material from Nielsen – took me on a trip through time. But so much of what motivated Nielsen's work is well-known as contemporary sentiments and social movements, as well as art. Exchange alienation through television and insufficient quality time with near-and-dear ones for the rise of social media and lack of time in our overscheduled lives, and you're in 2011. The desire to have art and activism touch each other is also intensely familiar. In a mental leap, I am thinking of the recent popular protests in North Africa, of how demonstrations can be the kind of 'ecstatic spaces' that

NEXT TOP MODEL

If art can provide models for societal change, what exemplars can it offer the current age?



researchers, including three MA education students, studied 20,000 children as they used the adventure playground. On top of that, five closed-circuit video cameras were installed in the exhibition space and the images were transmitted to monitors

words MARIA LIND

Larsen describes in his account of *The Model*. And yet they are so different. Back in the 1960s, Nielsen opted to act rather than to demonstrate, as he found the latter lacking in imagination. Right now I am pondering whether or not the protests testify to situations in which it is necessary to take action that goes beyond predetermined democratic routine in order to achieve change. And at the same time I am reminded of the fact that *The Model* was a pioneering project which took both art and activism in new directions, functioning precisely as a model should: a small-scale concrete experiment with speculative potential.

The experiment consisted of Nielsen, together with local activists, filling the main exhibition space of the museum with large wooden constructions composed of slides and steps, pools of foam rubber to jump into, costumes from the Royal Theatre, 200 carnival masks of Mao Tse-tung, Fidel Castro, Charles de Gaulle and Lyndon B. Johnson, and LP records of, among others, Bob Dylan, Frank Zappa, Ravi Shankar and dance music from the Renaissance. But there was also a considerable surveillance apparatus. Nielsen and a number of other

by the entrance. The children could operate the cameras via remote control, while a 'god's eye' camera fed live from high above the playground.

Hanging between *Pippi Longstocking* and *Lord of the Flies*, and with a touch of the Stanford Prison Experiment, this was a research project, an activist critique of everyday life and an inclusive process-oriented notion of art all rolled into one. The playground as a parallel political space, winking at Friedrich Schiller and Herbert Marcuse: play can take people from art to freedom. However, Larsen convincingly argues that in *The Model* play was less the essence of subjectivity than a child's form of production. Play became a productive force, and the child producers worked for themselves. So what happens when, today, as every aspect of life seems measured only in terms of economics and entertainment dominates the sphere of culture, play is the norm and can no longer be seen automatically as transgressive, as promising a society founded on qualitative values? What will allow us to ask the questions once posed by *The Model* anew, but in the context of a radically different reality?

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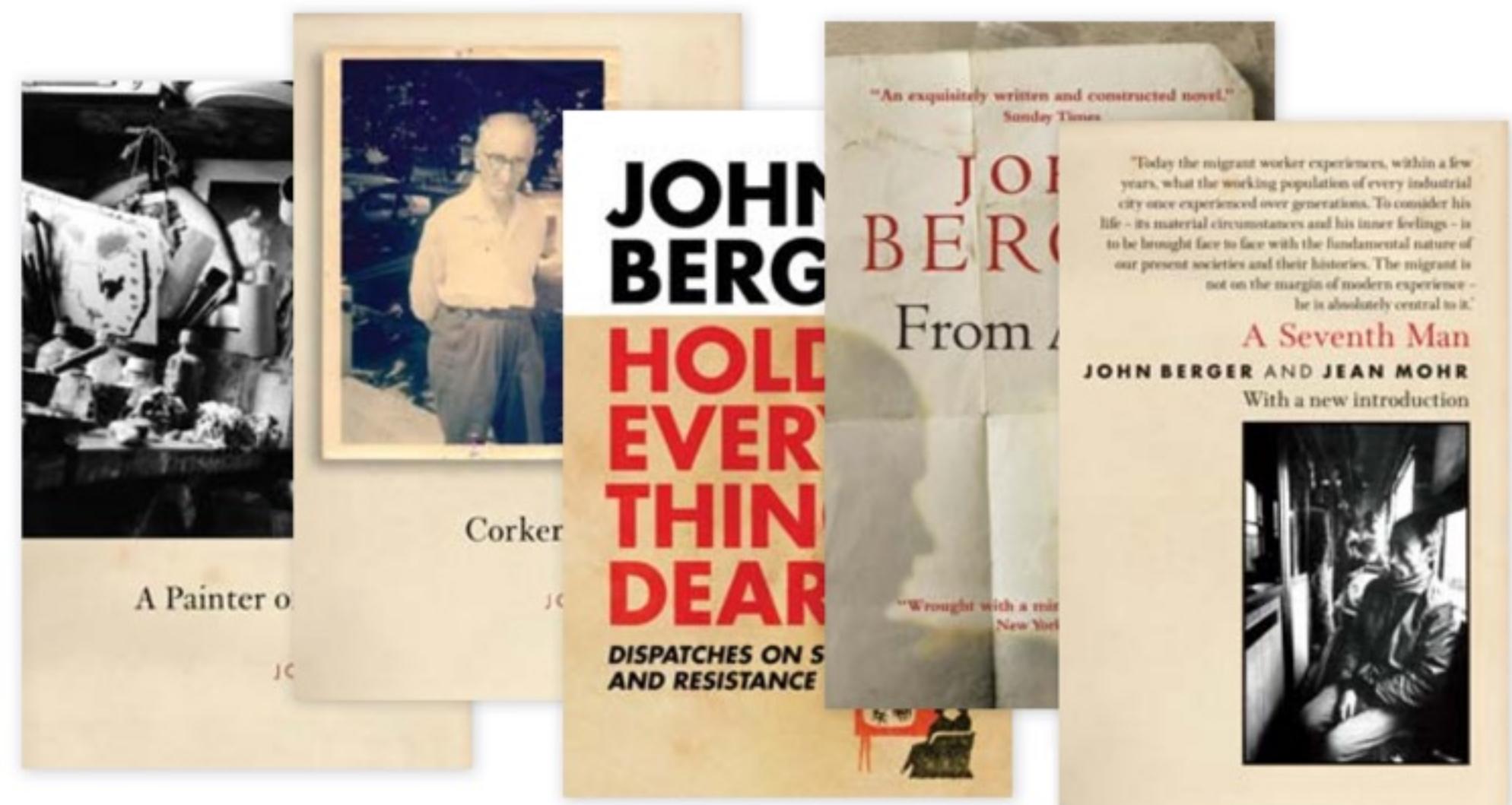


MIGRANT MESSAGE

Is one of John Berger's least-known works his best?

FOUR DECADES AFTER the publication of his *Ways of Seeing* (1972) and the first airing of its accompanying BBC television series, novelist and critic John Berger occupies an odd position in today's literary and artistic landscape. Despite that book's canonical presence as an art-historical provocation, the ideas Berger canvassed there – the ideological basis of Western art, its proximity to the clichés and lures of TV and marketing – were long ago eclipsed by more theoretically freighted texts. At the same time – notwithstanding a lavish 2005 South Bank festival in anticipation of his eightieth birthday the following year – Berger's literary reputation could not be more confused. Though he's regularly lauded in broadsheet literary pages, one suspects the best of his radical backlist languishes unread.

A Seventh Man, Berger's 1975 collaborative study of the plight of migrant workers in Europe, has long been out of print, and the publication of a new edition by Verso late last year went mostly unnoticed. But it's among his most essential volumes, both for its polemical and poetic force as an intimate portrait of the economically displaced, and for the subtlety of Berger and photographer Jean Mohr's juxtaposition of text and imagery. On being awarded the Booker Prize in 1972 (for his novel *G.*), Berger announced he was giving half the prize money to the Black Panthers and retaining the rest for research on the growing exiled labour force upon which Western economies



processes: his apprehension and confusion, his nostalgia and ambition, the shy camaraderie of workers' barracks in Geneva or Stuttgart, the fragile sense of self-respect felt by those returning home. At his best, Berger projects himself – the book stays close to its subjects, but never quotes them directly – into the mind of an abattoir worker driven near-mad by repetitive slaughter.

In the new edition, Mohr's photographs are slightly overprinted, rendering them darker and more melancholic than they first appeared. Some of those originally printed in full-

words BRIAN DILLON

depended. He had originally wanted to make a documentary film, but couldn't raise the extra cash required. Instead, he writes, 'we set out to make a book of moments... and we arranged these moments in chapters which resembled film sequences'.

The result is a book in which Berger's text glances off and departs from Mohr's seemingly straight documentary photographs. Berger's analysis of the politics and economics of migration is acute. He deals swiftly with the way immigrants were increasingly used in countries such as France and Germany to lower wages and ensure a workforce that could not organise itself, and with the effects (in rural Italy, Greece or Turkey) of losing a generation of the ambitious and hardworking. But the book is really about the migrant's thought

bleed are now centred and slightly diminished, so that they look a touch too exemplary or detached from the texts facing them. But for the most part their force and delicacy remains. Long lines of men – young and in early middle age – shuffle towards medical tests that will determine if they're fit enough for exile. We hardly see the cities to which they aspire; instead, Mohr tracks them through long train journeys, across chaotic factory floors, into the ubiquitous barracks built for those with no right of permanent residence. And all the while one has the sense that their precarity – the lack of workers' rights, the hostility towards 'guest workers' when they are not simply invisible – is just a rehearsal for wider-scale migrations to come.

A Seventh Man is not without its faults: though Mohr photographed women at work in factories, Berger elected to write exclusively about male workers – it would require another book to do justice to the lives of migrant women in Europe, he writes hastily. But it's nonetheless a book (as its author writes in his new preface) that has grown younger since it was first published – it reads now as a book about the future, not about the 1970s.



ANDRÉ BUTZER, "HÖRGERÄT (NEO-CÉZANNISMUS)", OIL ON CANVAS, 150 X 200 CM, 2010

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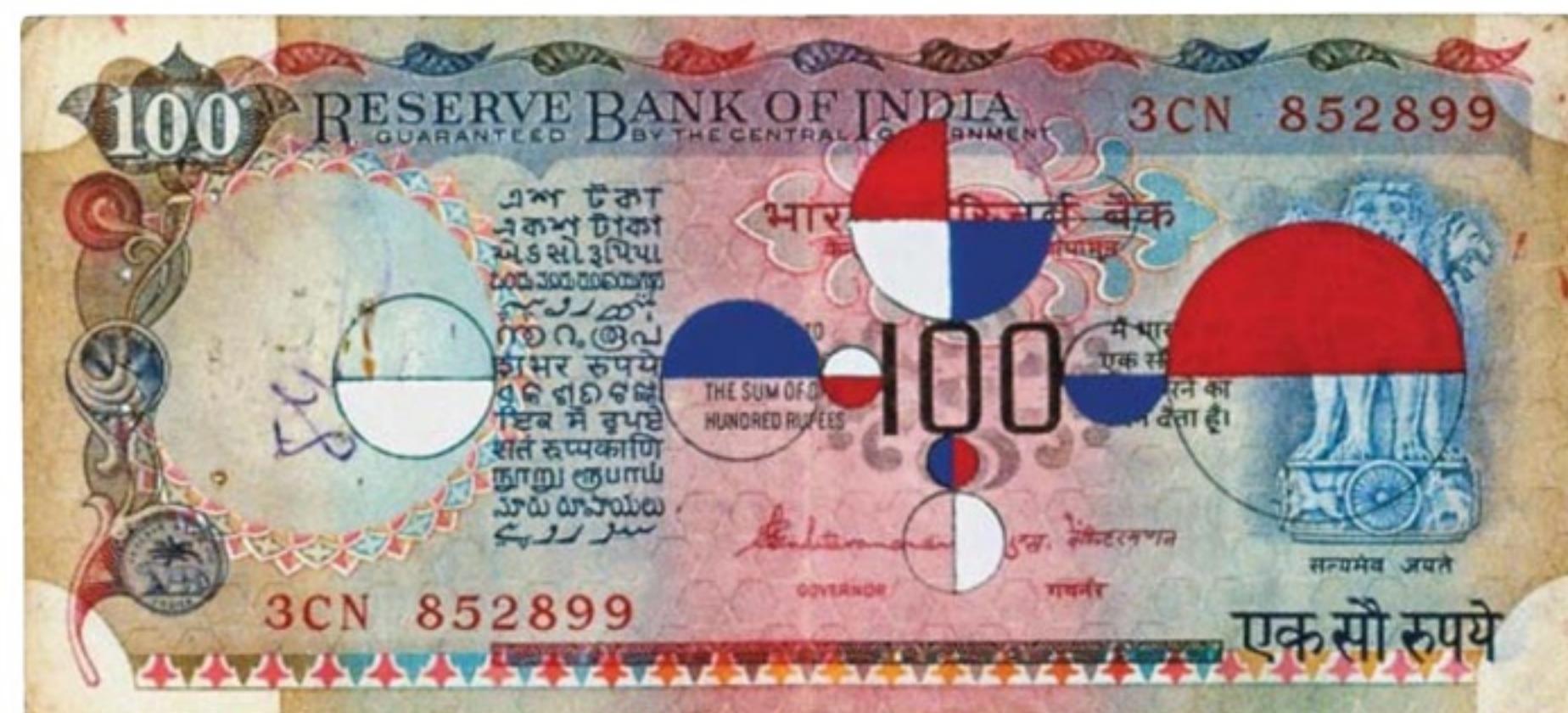
MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Just don't call it funny

NOT BEING MUCH of a gambling man, I haven't been inside a casino in a while. In the decade or so since I last visited one, something strange has happened: slot machines have become coinless. Gone is that mechanical process of feeding in coins and hearing their brittle rattling as they fall into the machine's interior. Gone too is that moment when, if you're lucky, the machine sickens up a jackpot of jingly cascading coins. In place of this physical drama, you now get a redeemable ticket that you slot into a bank machine to collect your winnings. While the result may be the same, the process is something else. The mechanical has been digitised: screens instead of spinning reels; logic boards replacing gears and cogs; bar codes and magnetic strips for coins.

But we already know that money – in the form of coins and notes – isn't really *real*; it's just a physical manifestation of an abstract value. Or, in the great phrasing of a US Customs form, a 'monetary instrument'. Monetary value itself is an invisible entity, a kind of invented magic underwritten by laws, regulation and consensual belief. It slips in and out of substances as though it were a restless supernatural spirit.

We know the story of how money developed this supernatural power: how the physical substance of a coin equated to the value it claimed to represent. We know too that this balance shifted to a point where the coin's value was no



Nevertheless, the design of coins and notes provides an intriguing record of the ways in which value is manufactured and protected. Value is built on surfaces embellished with symbols of nationhood, state, monarchy and culture that derive from the arcana of heraldic design, a language that links tender to sovereignty and government, symbolically tying it to those economic mechanisms that underpin the idea of money. Equally, these objects protect our trust through the intricate lacings of security systems: inks and colours, holograms and watermarks, foil strips and paper, the fretted edges that once

words SAM JACOB

longer self-defined, where it was no longer what it said it was. We know how notes became a way of referring to value by promising to be redeemable at any time for an actual material of value (gold). And we know that in more recent times banknotes have ceased to have any material value at all; today they can only be redeemed for other notes. Money flipped. Where once it was all about a pot of gold, now it's all about 'public trust' (and its maintenance via monetary policy). Money today is nothing more than a sign of our faith in the banking system.

When it comes to coins, a surreal byproduct of this split between signifier and signified was exposed in 2006, when copper's trading value shot up so high that 2p coins were worth more as a commodity than as a currency. That we stopped short of cashing in our notes for coppers and smelting them all down was simply a display of the strength of our faith (as well as, perhaps, our laziness).

foiled those who would have shaved off slivers of gold. Filigree lines – so fine that you can zoom in and in and in – loop back on themselves with almost psychotic intensity.

Money's esoteric symbolism, as found for example on the US \$1 bill, leads inevitably to conspiratorial readings. Pyramids and floating eyes come to represent that magic lurking within the apparatus of the state: Freemasonry, Satanism, Zionism – there's something for every obsession.

But perhaps the clearest demonstration of the power of money comes through its use in magic tricks: the notes that you can set on fire, or push a lit cigarette through; stacks of coins that seem to come and go; coins that fold or have bites taken out of them. All these props manufacture versions of money, carefully mimicking its physical appearance and simultaneously embedding an extranormal ability. Confronted by the threat of destruction, disintegration or other peril to its physical existence, money's material quality becomes magnified. It is testament to money's unique qualities that it takes the lens of conjuring tricks to rematerialise its physicality, to counterbalance the real magic of money.



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www.boijmans.nl

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SLICE OF LIFE

As an unusual design project demonstrates, knives are as useful for bonding as for cutting

THE SHAMELESS RE COURSE to popular fiction that accompanies the family flu season has left me with a head full of Horcruxes. The idea, espoused in the *Harry Potter* books, that the human soul might be divided between significant objects, is rather pleasing – rather like a *Desert Island Discs* for design fetishists. As anyone who has had to sort through the hoarded possessions of a dead relative will know, Voldemort (aka Potter's soul-dividing nemesis) is not the only creature to have tried to tie himself to the earth through material things. The sacks of buttons, envelopes of shrapnel, bowls, bones and brandy glasses that make up such human ballast are a portrait of the human mind as told through its stimuli, each piece sparking memories or sensations that keep us lashed safely to our past.

Photographs, souvenirs and anecdotes are evidence of what could be called an event memory, but there is also a more private memory that exists in the interplay between the body and useful objects, a gestural, muscular memory that can evoke something less easily defined – an atmosphere, a period of time, a state of mind and the memory of doing. Will the objects that we handle on a regular basis become as significant to us in old age as those of our grandparents' generation? One does not personally feel nostalgia for a particular laptop computer in the way that one would for a pair of walking boots or an ink pen, even though all three are highly functional objects. There is also a third kind of memory in things – an accumulated cultural memory – that dissipates as products are developed for a global



demands that would be made on such a multifunctional tool, then designed and made their own versions of it. As a master leuku maker, Laiti has skills as a smith, a wood and bone carver, and a leatherworker – he makes knives fit to be used hard over the course of a lifetime.

Over the last two years, Heikkilä has opened the project up, inviting some of the world's top product designers, including Jasper Morrison, Naoto Fukasawa, Konstantin Grcic and the Bouroullec brothers, to reinterpret the leuku for a modern world. Each of the 22 studios that participated in the project were sent one of Laiti's knives to study. Their designs were sent back to Finland to be made into prototypes, before taking their place in a touring exhibition designed to raise awareness of

words HETTIE JUDAH

mass market. In older cultures, the passage of life brings with it companion objects that become a kind of social cement.

For a Finn, a knife is part of identity, explains designer Simo Heikkilä. Kids are given a knife when they are as young as five or six. It is an everyday object that becomes part of adventures and stories. The knives that Heikkilä refers to are the *puukko* and *leuku* – traditional Sámi tools that have evolved over centuries to function in temperatures as low as minus 50 degrees celsius and endure a lifetime of hunting, fishing, cooking, carving and lopping off tree branches.

Heikkilä's projects started simply as a gesture towards preserving the traditional craftsmanship of the *leuku* knife. In 2005 he organised a workshop at the forge of master knifemaker Josef Laiti in the village of Outakoski in northern Finland, at which participants learned about the various

disappearing traditional crafts, and objects with particular local identities. This – the end of the line for these knives – has already been shown at last year's Saint-Etienne Biennale in France, and will end this year in Japan.

Heikkilä tells me that the designers found the project simultaneously inspiring and near impossible – having evolved over centuries to fit their purpose, the knives are already, in their own context, perfect objects – and most of them ended up focusing on symbolic alterations: engraving a name on the blade or colouring it to patinate more visibly, rather than touching its design. Fukasawa was one of the exceptions, producing a knife that melded Finnish and Japanese knifecraft to create a piece that looks traditional to both – a kind of bilingual cultural memory. The *leuku* emerged from this project as an object so personal that the only logical changes it invites come through a life in the hand of the user – an object that cuts, but also an object that binds.

GROÙE KÜNSTLER der ZUKUNFT?

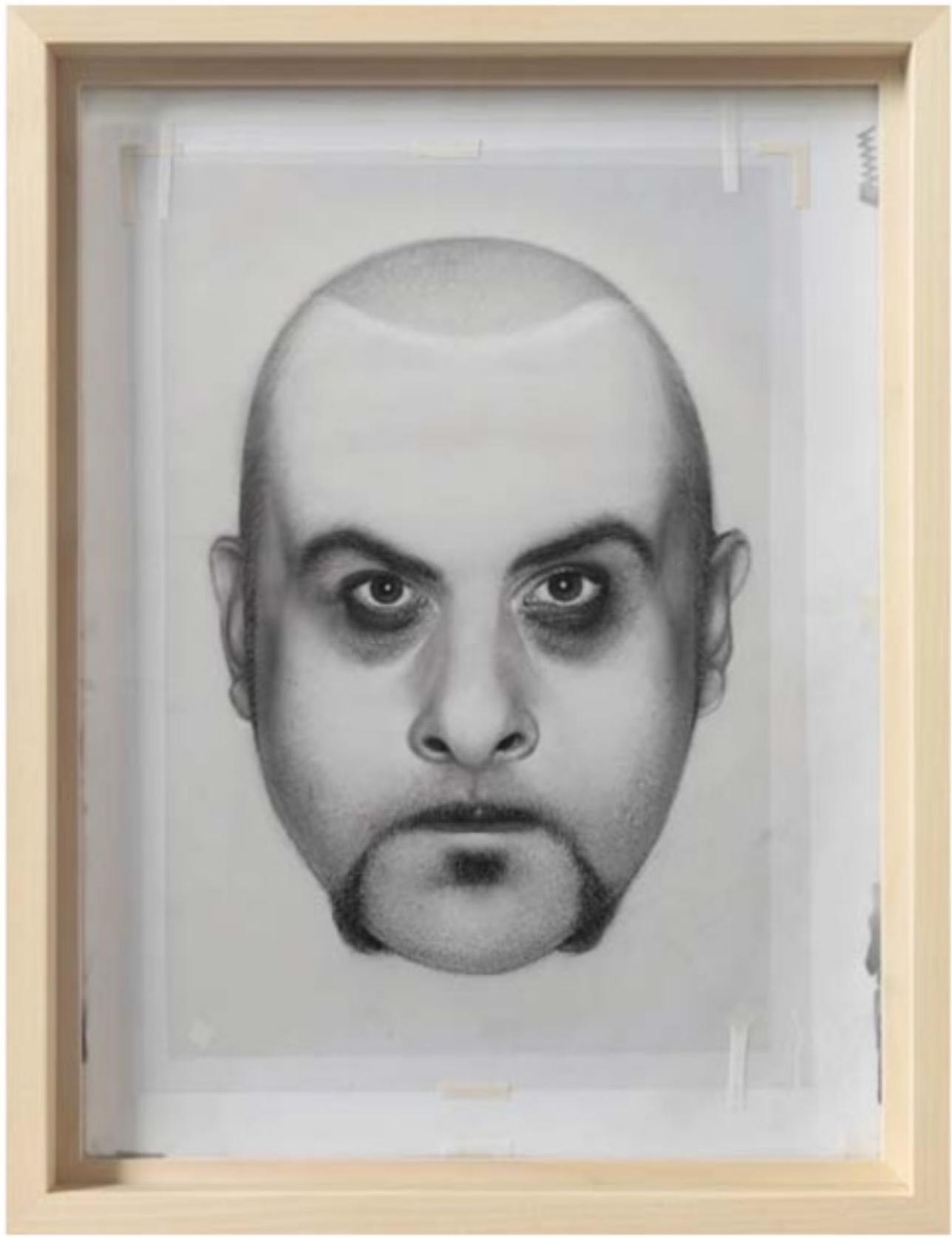


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Der
KUNSTHAß der ZUKUNFT!

WHAT TO SEE THIS MONTH BY HEIDI ZUCKERMAN JACOBSON

Director and chief curator,
Aspen Art Museum



1 ROBERTO CUOGHI

Hammer Museum, Los Angeles
To 15 May
www.hammer.ucla.edu

Cuoghi's installation at the ICA in London in 2008 was one of the most amazing art experiences I've had in recent memory. The mesmerising, otherworldly recreation/imagination of sounds from ancient Assyria and the fact that he'd fabricated all the instruments himself made it such a leap of creative faith, such a genius idea. This, his first solo museum show in the US, is characteristically different. It involves speculative self-portraits: what he might look like had he chosen not to be an artist. That's a really captivating intellectual space the artist is encouraging us to visit, and I have curator envy of this show.

2 SHARJAH BIENNIAL

16 March - 16 May
www.sharjahbiennial.org

Over the last few years there's been a lot of interest in what's happening in art from the Middle East. Though a lot of the talk has been about museum architecture, what about the art that goes in it? Curated by Suzanne Cotter and Rasha Salti in collaboration with Haig Aivazian and featuring 119 artists from not only the Middle East but also North Africa and South Asia, this show seems like it will be a really good opportunity to get a sense of the work being made there and what its strengths are.



3 MORGAN FISHER

Films and Paintings and In Between and Nearby
Raven Row, London
24 February - 24 April
www.ravenrow.org

I was in a panel discussion with Fisher a few years ago and was struck by the idiosyncrasy of his vision and how highly influential his work is, despite it seemingly having fallen off the radar. This show, featuring seven moving-image works and also Fisher's paintings, is - surprisingly - the first survey of the American artist's 40-year career. Every once in a while an artist just gets skipped; I take consolation in the idea that, as here, some bright person will notice that absence and reinsert that artist in the continuum of art history.

4 GENERAL IDEA

Haute Culture: A Retrospective, 1969-1994
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
To 30 April
www.mam.paris.fr

Bringing together 300 works across numerous media, this, too, seems to be a first retrospective for the Canadian collective. General Idea began in 1969 but two of the members died in 1994, and I was struck by the show's emphatic subtitle. AA Bronson has gone on to do really interesting things - running Printed Matter, going to divinity school, recently taking an extremely intelligent stance in regard to the Smithsonian controversy. That subtitle, honouring and respecting his colleagues' passing, showed the same class, if you will, that Bronson has demonstrated in a lot of other arenas.

5 SUSAN PHILIPSZ

We Shall Be All
MCA Chicago
26 February - 12 June
www.mcachicago.org

I've had the pleasure of experiencing Philipsz's work in a lot of different locations - we recently installed a piece of hers in Aspen that you have to ski to in order to hear - yet she always catches me off guard. One element that differentiates her work from that of other artists who use the human voice is the amount of research she does. In this solo museum presentation - an exciting prospect in itself - it seems she's going to be inspired by Chicago's complex political history. It will be interesting to see whether Chicagoans are familiar with the songs or slogans she uses.

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ALEXANDER CALDER, *FLAMINGO*, 1974 / photo: Audia

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fable to **fustian**

fable A common art installation trope, referencing approved validation formulas.

faeces Intense, slow-drying paste material of high (see **fine art**) cultural specificity with a recurrent approval-usage locus endorsement in art practice. Collectors need take care that artists' faeces are not **fake**.

failure See **happiness, schadenfreude**.

fake See **phoney sincerity**.

fancy picture A term applied in the eighteenth century to sentimental, usually rural genre scene pictures. Peasants may be idealised, and there is a sense of artificial contrivance about such works. See **porn**.

farce See **art prize competition judges**.

fashion See **skull, rib cage, bones**.

feelings The secret touchings of the sexy area of the loved one at the boring **vernissage**.

fellatio Oral sex act performed upon a male. Also known as a **blow job** (BJ). When performed upon a female, oral sex is called cunnilingus, or a **muff dive** (MD). The BJ/MD is claimed by certain theorists to be a measurable unit of socioevolutionary obligation, and of special interest in relation to determinant values in cultural practice. Opinions differ as to how best to apply the concept of the BJ/MD within a proper disciplinary framework, although there is now an increasingly precise understanding of what typically makes up one BJ/MD unit. Proponents argue that a consideration of cultural developments from a BJ's/MD's-eye view – as if BJs/MDs themselves respond to pressure to maximise their own replication and survival – can lead to useful insights and yield valuable predictions into how culture develops over time. See **Freud, psychoanalysis, Leonardo da Vinci**.

female supremacy See **muff dive**.

feminism See **female supremacy**.

feminist criticism See **female supremacy**.

feminist theology See **female supremacy**.

fetishism See **female supremacy**.

ficelle Term used by Henry James to describe a minor character in a novel whose conversations with the protagonist serve to provide background information for the reader.

fine art See **free-market capitalism**.

fixation See **Freud, psychoanalysis**.

flâneur A common art trope, referencing approved validation formulas.

flashback See **John Berger**.

flight An art trope that references **sexual potency** and **departure time delay**. See **curator**.

folk art, folklore The collective wisdom of the 'folk' – customs, beliefs, pithy stories, rituals, games, dances, songs, legends, myths, tales, proverbs, sayings, violently racist football chants, etc.

folly Architectural term. A synonym for **site-specific, installation or intervention art**.

forensic medicine A common art trope, referencing approved validation formulas.

formalism A pejorative term in Soviet art criticism.

formulaic system Commonplace conformity to stock arts-professional idea locus narratives, especially those that reference approved locus validation criteria of locus specificity.

found object A common art trope, referencing approved validation formulas.

fragment A common art trope, referencing approved validation formulas.

free association See **Freud, fixation, fellatio**.

free-market capitalism See **faeces**.

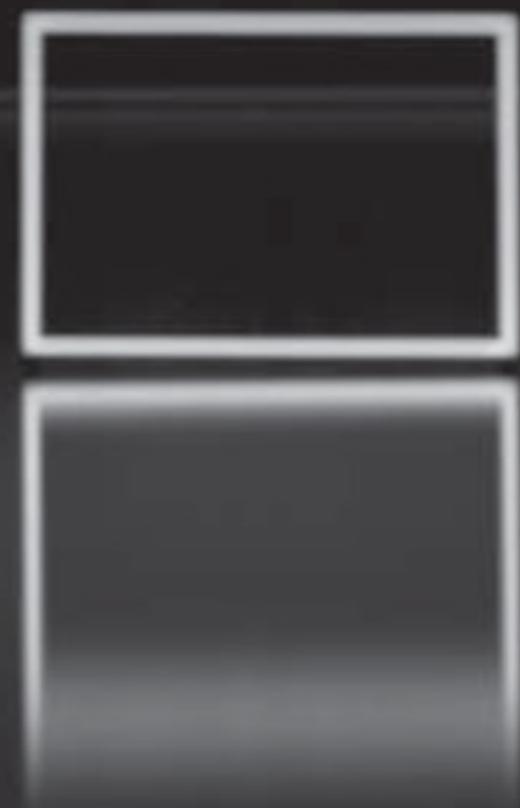
Freud Author of a book about **Leonardo da Vinci**. Freud sought, unsuccessfully, to assert his supremacy over Leonardo, the incomparably greater genius, by subjecting him to an (unintentionally comical) analysis. This included certain disparagements related to oral sex (see **fellatio**). Freud's book is all the more humorous because it is based on a gross mistranslation of a Leonardo text. After his discovery of the mistranslation, Freud said ruefully of his book that 'it is the only beautiful thing I have ever written'. Thus, through his description of a conflated holding of a hard penile stylus with the singularity of shamed beauty, Freud revealed his own unconscious desire to take a hard cock in his mouth and swallow a bucket of hot stinking cum.

friend-substitution strategy A pragmatic meditative technique by which boring art is made more interesting to the viewer by imagining it has been created by a close friend.

fuscous A dark, drab colour. May refer to the olive, leaden or similar dark colouring of the coarse woven clothes traditionally worn by art historians and art critics. These scholar-academics tend to be heavily bearded and either a) resolutely Marxist or b) resolutely conservative. Dried egg yolk is often found to be present on their clothing as a yellowish ingress pressed within the rough fibres that clothe the upper chest (thorax) area or, as a bold variant, upon the fabric surface in a glistening impasto. Yolk may also be present in the wearer's beard, including the women. See **fustian**.

fustian See **fuscous**.

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KANYE DIG IT?

How hip-hop's muscling in on art's controversial cool

AS IS NOW WIDELY KNOWN, Kanye West has been integrated into the unmistakable painting language of George Condo for the cover of his new album, *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*. In the most surreal of a range of five covers, we see the rapper in flagrante – supine on the couch, beer in hand and straddled by a bat-eared, armless harpy with spotted tail, wings and hairy legs. West has joined characters such as Rodrigo, Big Red and Little Ricky in Condo's cast of antipodal subjects, all boxed into a world of shattered faces, screaming lust and teeth-gnashing existential crisis. The response to the album has been clear: it is banned from the shelves of Walmart (of which more later) and comically pixelated on iTunes to protect us from the cover's erotic allure.

I am no expert on hip-hop album covers, but my research confirms a suspicion: that the hip-hop community is not known for shying away from bizarre confrontational imagery of dubious taste. The experts among you will doubtless be able to cast your minds back to 1991, and the album art of Geto Boys's *We Can't Be Stopped*, featuring group member Bushwick Bill on a hospital gurney after being shot in the eye. Then there's Indo G with his cover for *Christmas N' Memphis*, from 2002, where 'G', dressed as Santa with a leaking sackful of cash, is being held up by a pair of colossal silver pistols. And who could forget the 2006 Top Dog compilation album *Slam Dunk'n Hoes*, featuring 'Mr Dog' – with straight face – dunking a scantily clad woman upside down through a basketball hoop.

All of these covers, delivered with either deadpan photography or amateur Photoshop trickery, are gleefully aggressive to the concept of taste. Needless to say, such albums would never appear either in Walmart or on iTunes, which says a lot about both the market West is going for, and the nature of the

portraits of musicians (Frankie Goes to Hollywood – also no strangers to the benefits of banning – in fact took its name from a background strapline text in Peellaert's portrait of Frank Sinatra), it featured Bowie in sphinxlike repose, his rear end and the haunches of a dog, but complete with fully visible human genitalia. Although the detail was later airbrushed out, the small number of original uncensored copies that were circulated went on to become some of the most expensive record collectibles of all time (more on that next month).

West's ambition, as expressed to Condo during the project, was to have something crazy – something that could get *banned*. Although this may indicate that West was already thinking of the cover as a marketing coup, the ambition recognises the obvious point established by Bowie and other predecessors: that a ban provides a cultural endorsement of an image's power. The public cannot process it, so the 'squares' need to step in to protect us from it. Yet is there more to it? Considering the photographic and Photoshopped album covers mentioned earlier – the gangsta Santas, the eye-socket trepannings, the sporting use of female escorts – a question arises: what was it that prompted West, with a ban in mind,

words NIGEL COOKE

'scandal' that formed around the 'banning' of the cover. The fact that Walmart doesn't stock *any* albums with parental advisory labels (regardless of lurid contemporary-painting content), and that West swiftly retracted the Condo cover, suggests a desire to have it both ways: bag the notoriety and attendant publicity, without sacrificing the most accessible platforms for hauling in the profits.

It's a tried-and-tested strategy, so why not? West's cover follows numerous examples of iconic but banned album art, sharing multiple similarities with David Bowie's *Diamond Dogs* (1974). Like West's, this album featured an original oil painting representing a chimerical image of the singer. Painted by the Belgian artist Guy Peellaert, famous at the time for

to consider contemporary painting to achieve it? With the hollowness of the censorship ringing throughout the story, the allegiance feels to be much less with the wilfully nasty, sickening or politically outrageous tradition of banned hip-hop covers and more with a different, more Euro-cultural kind of censorship furore. In fact, the desired shock seems ancestral to painting, not hip-hop; from Manet's *Odalisque* (1863) to Chris Ofili's *Holy Virgin Mary* (1996), outrage towards painting seldom results in a ban – more a rethinking of the avant-garde, a jolt to the system that recalibrates the expectations of the cultural moment. West, in turning away from using ban-guaranteed imagery from the ultraoffensive end of hip-hop iconography, has maybe introduced a secret ambition to the packaging of his work, a desire to align himself, perhaps, with the kind of recoiling that stirs up not merely cash and notoriety but also questions, criticism and even change.



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CONSUMED

The pick of things you didn't know you really needed. Words OLIVER BASCIANO



01

Orishiki, the title designer Naoki Kawamoto has given to the series that this clutch purse comes from, makes reference to the line's *origami*-inspired forms and *furoshiki*-inspired functionality - *furoshiki* being a large cloth with myriad uses in Japanese culture, from that of makeshift shopping bag to scarf. Here, the makings for a night out are placed into the faceted, silk-lined interior of the bag, which is then folded into its geometric end-shape with a few clicks, enclosing the valuables in its shell.

www.naokikawamoto.com

02

Other Criteria has launched a rare-books line featuring titles named by various contemporary artists as having had particular resonance. All books stocked are either out of print or pricey first editions, and they come signed by their artist nominators. Among the choices: 74-77 (1978), a self-published book of photographs by performance artist Chris Burden, selected by Michael Joo, and Rachel Howard's pick, *The Death Notebooks* (1974), poet Anne Sexton's dark anthology, written in the months before her suicide.

www.othercriteria.com

03

In a new series of Brigade Commerz editions, artists and musicians are collaborating to produce 12-inch picture discs. First up is Liam Gillick - the UK-born artist who promised his grandfather he would never work down in the mines and happily instead represented Germany at the last Venice Biennale - working with Corinne Jones, drummer in the all-female Brooklyn band Effi Briest. Gillick designed the artwork, and he and Jones produced the dubby techno music contained therein. The record is limited to a run of 20, so best get in quick.

www.brigadecommerz.com

04

Initiated in 2009 by artist (and former Moot curator) Tom Godfrey, *Marbled Reams* is a print project inspired by a work of the same title that Godfrey developed in 2007, in which a stack of 500 A4 photocopied prints was 'marbled' along one of its edges. Since then Godfrey has been commissioning artists, including Sara MacKillop (her work pictured) and Mark Harasimowicz, to create a single A4 work, which is then copied 500 times and marbled along an edge. The results are sold as individual sheets; an annual subscription to the project is also available.

www.marbledreams.com

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CONTEMPORARY ART FAIR



05
Soul-singing sex symbol Teddy Pendergrass led an eventful life, rising to stardom in the 1970s before a car accident left him partially paralysed. Occupying the passenger seat was a transsexual nightclub performer named Tenika Watson – not the company his fans expected him to be keeping. Speaking of which, Pinocchio had his ups and downs too. In this spoken-word LP, titled *Pinocchio Is on Fire* and limited to 150 copies, artist Mark Bradford combines the Pendergrass and Pinocchio stories to create the tale of a third character, whom we hear interviewed for a fictional radio show.

06
Artists Space has launched its annual portfolio of limited-edition work, in a run of 100. This year for your dollar (or a thousand) you get five works packed inside a presentation box designed by Dexter Sinister and with a text by Nick Relph. Danh Vo, Trisha Donnelly and Anne Collier (her work pictured) have provided c-print photographs; Guyton/Walker a set of 15 stickers, each around six inches wide, depicting garishly coloured fruit; and T.J. Wilcox a flipbook entitled *I Fell in Love with Vanessa Redgrave*, the cover of which features the actress pulling a funny face.

www.artistsspace.org

07
Martin Creed's band used to be one that you accidentally encountered in the basement of an East End record shop or at a party – there they always were, playing the *Fuck Off* song (Work No. 337, 2004). Now they've gone all proper, releasing a version of the melancholic *Thinking/Not Thinking* (Work No. 431, 2004-5), along with a video starring Sparky and Orson (pictured), who represent the duality of the title (Sparky, on the left, is the thinker). The release is limited to 2,000 copies and comes with signed additional artwork (Work No. 1085, 2011).

www.martincreed.com

08
Artists Brook & Black are turning Modern Art Oxford's building back into a brewery as part of their ongoing residency at the gallery. Researching in the archives, Leora Brook and Tiffany Black came across documentation on the brewery that had occupied the building in the nineteenth century. Inspired by this history, they planted a crop of green hops at the site, which has now been harvested and is fermenting as a limited run of 1,000 hand-bottled beers, available from the gallery shop and café.

www.modernartoxford.org.uk

DIGESTED

It's what we think you should swallow, or spit out



TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT, WHAT YOU REALLY, REALLY WANT

By Jan Verwoert

For those of you who are feeling tired, I prescribe art critic Jan Verwoert's essay 'Exhaustion and Exuberance: Ways to Defy the Pressure to Perform', which is excellent medicine for anyone suffering from the effects of 'high performance' culture. Feel like dancing? Another essay on social choreography gives a persuasive answer to the question of whether or not popular dance styles create or reflect modernity. In this book of collected writings, we follow the author around the artworks that catch his attention as he throws some wildly emphatic energy at Enrico David's *Chicken Man Gong* (2005) and ponders the road not travelled in the paintings of Tomma Abts. The essays in this collection have an unusually direct, yet calming, form of address for an art critic: it's all about you, dear reader. His frequent references to pop songs rather than the alienating blitz of philosophical references we have come to expect in such essays comfortably equalise the pressures of Hegel and Lacan, and remind us that we are speaking the same language (why else would you summon the Spice Girls for the title of an essay collection?). It's a gentle trick used by someone who wants to connect with the reader on an intimate level, because intimacy, I suppose, might be something that we really, really want.

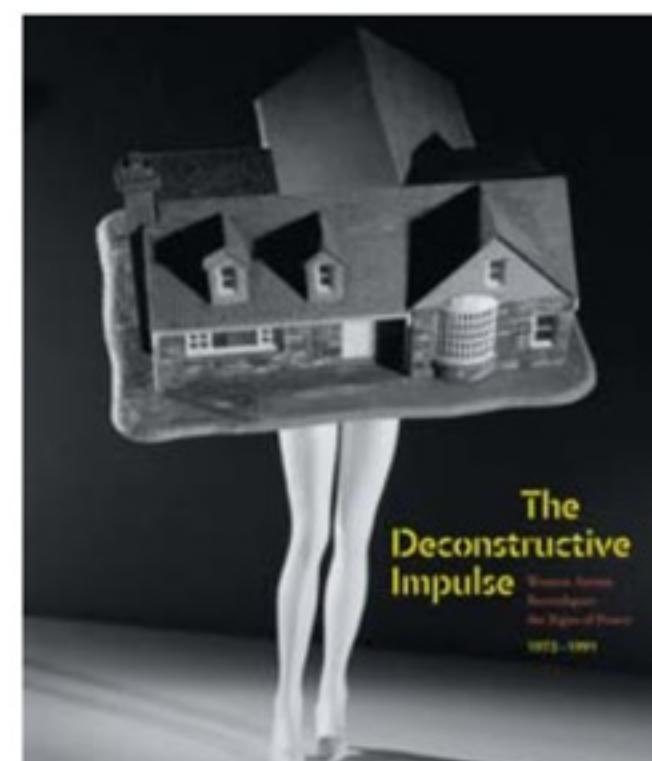
Laura McLean-Ferris

Piet Zwart Institute / Sternberg Press, €18 (hardcover)

The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power (1973–1991) Edited by Nancy Princenthal

Last year, *Rolling Stone* reported that Beyoncé replaced a Laurie Simmons print chosen by husband Jay-Z for their home, of a gun atop a woman's high-heeled legs, in favour of one featuring a walking perfume bottle. Yet another work from that series, *Walking House* (1989), provides the cover for this catalogue, produced for an exhibition at SUNY Purchase's Neuberger Museum of Art. Here Simmons's work features alongside artists such as Louise Lawler, Cindy Sherman and Martha Rosler. A set of short essays from the likes of Griselda Pollock, Kristine Stiles and Tom McDonough tackle the notion that a move towards a particularly image-based form of postmodern art (produced by a cohort of baby boomers often categorised as part of Douglas Crimp's 'Pictures Generation') was brought about chiefly by feminist concerns: McDonough focuses on the desire to become an 'inorganic thing' that was engendered in women by advertising; Stiles argues that domesticity, in contrast to its more common representation as a trap for women, can also represent a useful site for shifting meaning. Jay-Z and B's disagreement over how Simmons's images of woman-as-thing are absorbed into their (rather public) home, the uncertainty regarding their take on the artist's point, as well as the subsequent reporting of such ('Beyoncé wears the trousers') reveal that the debate surrounding the problems of how 'signs of power' are traded and reconfigured still (ahem) has legs. *Laura McLean-Ferris*

Prestel, £35 (hardcover)

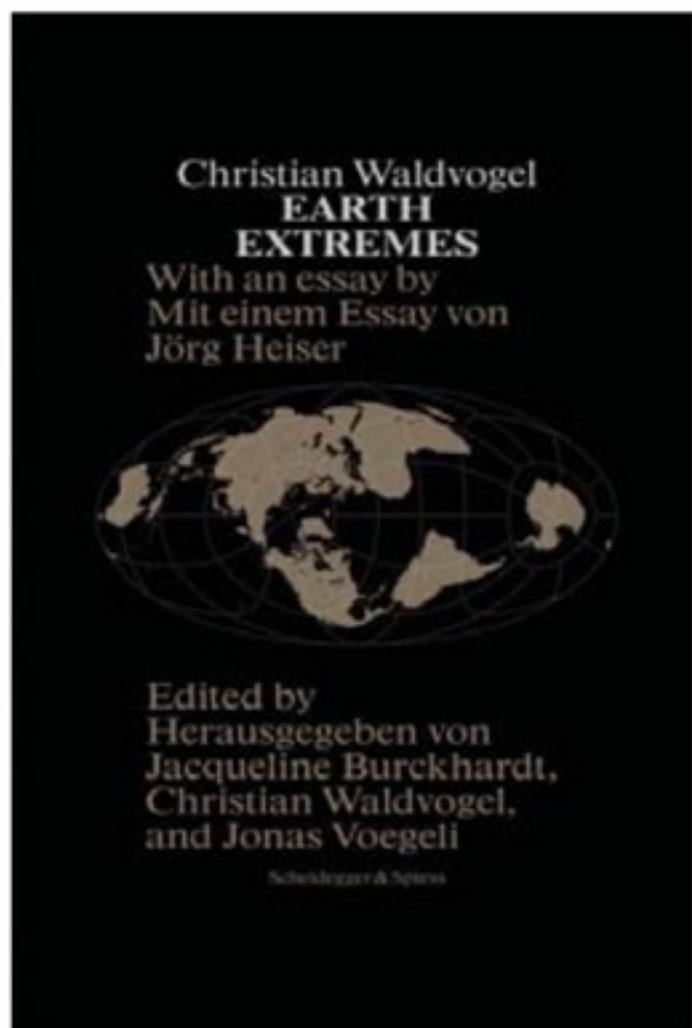


ARCHITECTS' SKETCHBOOKS

Edited by Will Jones

This compendium makes liberal use of the word 'sketches', incorporating a wide range of tools and media deployed in the early stages of a building's design: painting, modelmaking, collage and cartoon strips. This last comes courtesy of young Spanish firm Mi5 Arquitectos (one of 85 practices represented here), who explain that presenting their ideas in this manner gives their clients a fictional space in which to 'redescribe themselves'. The space of the notebook (or workbench) is one in which to interrogate ideas before they are subjected to economic and political restrictions. London-based Glowacka Rennie is a firm of prolific modelmakers, and Agnieszka Glowacka's explanation that 'the hands have an intrinsic link to the brain and eye' is one echoed throughout the included architect interviews, each maintaining that it's this process of testing, rather than the end documentation, that aids production. ('A sketch is everything and then nothing', claims Australian Sean Godsell.) The tome's editor, Will Jones, remains strangely opaque about his own process of selection; what criteria, for example, allows the inclusion of Will Alsop's dreadful paintings but leaves Frank Gehry's line drawings, present in MoMA's collection, absent from this one? What remains, however, are souvenirs of ideas: epitaphs if unrealised, fossil evidence when they have evolved into built structures and master plans. *Oliver Basciano*

Thames & Hudson, £29.95 (hardcover)



Christian Waldvogel: Earth Extremes Edited by Jacqueline Burckhardt, Christian Waldvogel, Jonas Voegeli

'Christian who?' That's what I thought when I flipped this massive book over to check the back-cover blurb: Waldvogel, artist and architect, 'has been attracting the attention of the European art scene ever since 2004, when he was chosen to represent Switzerland at the Architecture Biennale in Venice', it bragged. Which led me to conclude that I must have been spending too much time in the US this past decade. Still, the best thing about any book is when it tells you something you didn't already know. *Earth Extremes* presents nine projects completed over the past six years. Waldvogel initially trained as an architect (and later in digital music), but that's far from obvious in this volume, which privileges the cosmological, threading a narrative of man's attempts to locate himself in the universe, from Galileo to GPS. Part history book, part novel, part science book and (smallest) part artist's catalogue, there's no doubting that, in an artworld in which many similarly costly tomes are left to gather dust on a shelf, prop open a door or be little more than potential murder weapons in an Agatha Christie-type novel, this volume is actually one that you'll spend a long time reading. *Mark Rappolt*

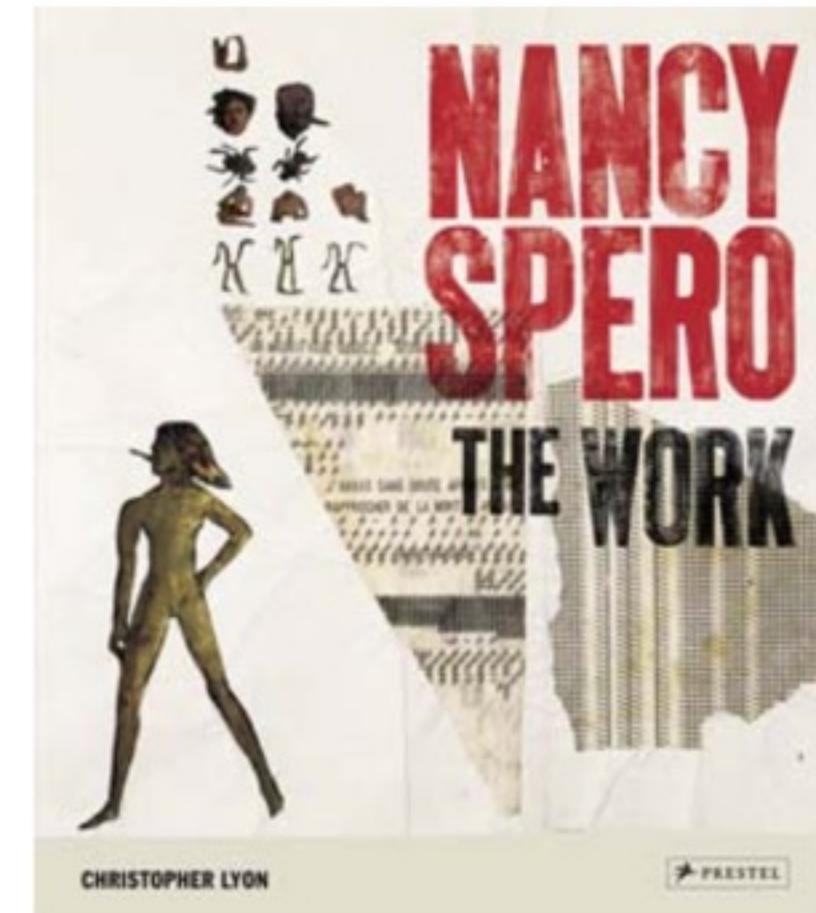
Scheidegger & Spiess, £55 (hardcover)

TOKYO TOKYO

By WassinkLundgren

Working collaboratively since 2005, Dutch photographers Thijs groot Wassink and Ruben Lundgren have produced a lot of work in a short amount of time, including the award-winning *Empty Bottles* (2008), a study of bottle collectors in Beijing and Shanghai. For *Tokyo Tokyo*, WassinkLundgren bring a pincer movement to street photography, operating in tandem to capture different views of the same person at the same moment. This 'double gaze', as the photographers describe it, translates into a series of diptychs depicting the daily life of the city's inhabitants, each photo distinctive for the views and perspectives tendered (Lundgren, at more than two metres tall, tends to come in high and close), but together creating a sort of 3D, front-and-back effect. Understanding how each photographer sees the world is intrinsic to such a tightly collaborative practice, of course, and never more so than in *Tokyo Tokyo*, where the artistic cooperation is formally integrated into the work. But what makes WassinkLundgren's books so good is the way they extend this collaboration to their designers (here Kummer & Herman), incorporating them as the third partner in the practice. As photography books continue their evolution away from straightforward, commercially produced presentation vessels and towards self-published objects in themselves, WassinkLundgren may have found their ideal artform. *Tom Watt*

Kodoji Press / Archive of Modern Conflict, €32 (softcover)



Nancy Spero: The Work By Christopher Lyon

It's easy to argue that American painter Nancy Spero, who died a couple of years ago, is underrecognised in the contemporary artworld. Which is ironic, given that a part of her project was to insert into, or increase the recognition of, the female presence in the history of art. Or maybe that's not ironic at all and just shows how dominant the masculine vision remains. What's more interesting about this scholarly and comprehensive volume, however, is the opportunity it presents to consider what an important artist Spero was in visual terms. Beyond the feminism and her famed combinations of text and imagery, it's her delicate sense of composition, developed during the 1960s and 70s, which shines through. Particularly, for this viewer, as it emerges in the fantastic scroll-like paintings of her *Codex Artaud* (1971–2). Ultimately, Spero's art comes across as a series of dazzling speeches, with dramatic pauses, shouts and whispers to match even the most able of orators. And they are well worth listening to again and again. *Mark Rappolt*

Prestel, £60 (hardcover)

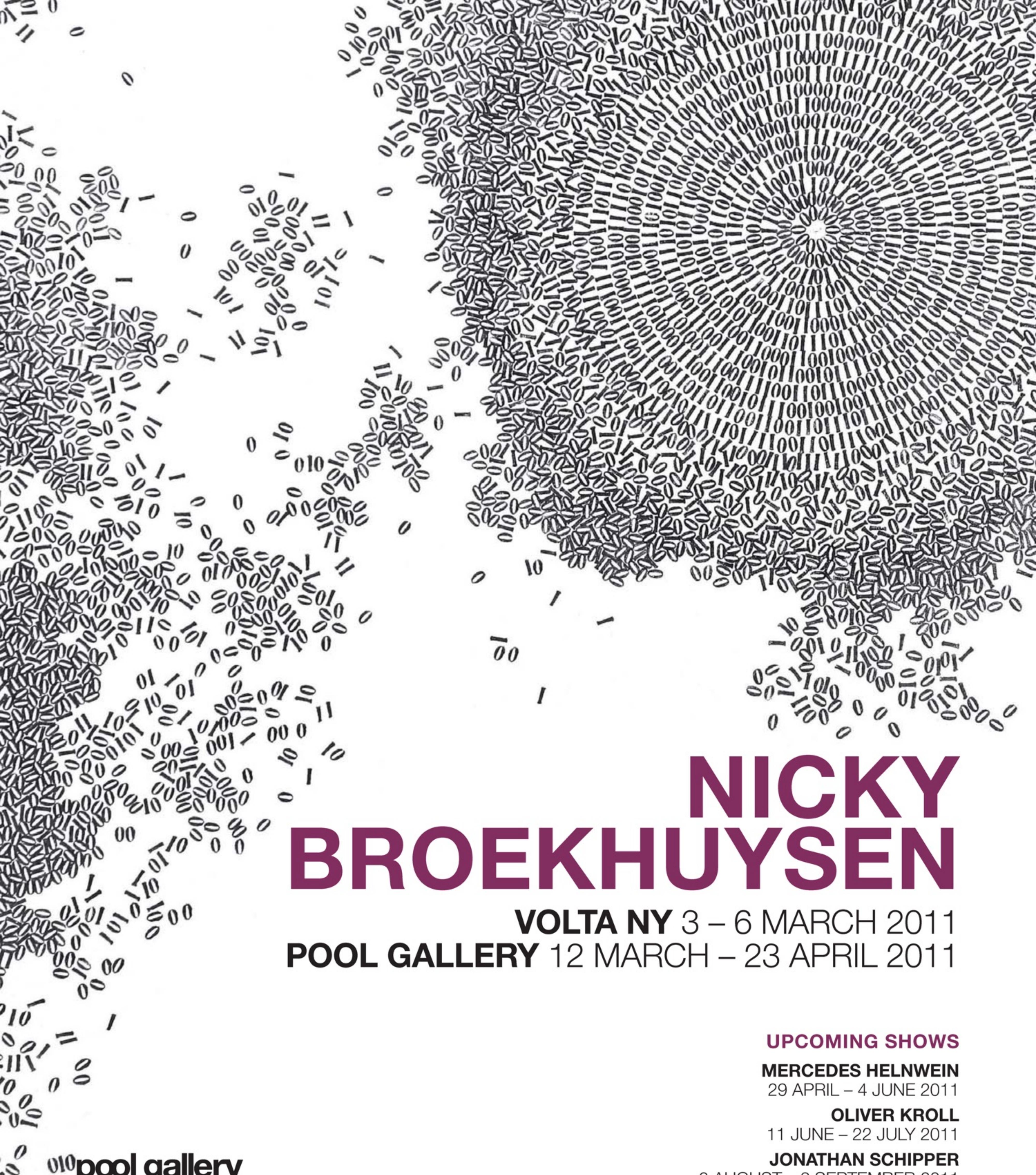


Nadim KARAM 'Father Elephant' 150 X 200 X 24 cm. Glass and Resin beads on Wood 2009

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In this ongoing series, the writers who have shaped the way we think about art talk frankly about what's on their minds

NO 2: PLINY THE ELDER ON CLASSICAL ART



The first book by Gaius Plinius Secundus, better known as Pliny the Elder, was about how to throw javelins; the last was an immense work of natural philosophy, which included descriptions of Greek and Roman sculptures. These formed the model for subsequent art history up to the time of Vasari in the Renaissance. Born in 23 AD, Pliny died in Naples on 25 August 79 AD, after inhaling poisonous gases emitted by the erupting volcano Vesuvius.

interview by MATTHEW COLLINGS

ARTREVIEW

What's the use of classical art, what big ideas does it help with?

PLINY Classical art basically means the art of the Greeks and Romans. But a lot of principles come out of all that, which are important for later waves of culture. The effect is different every time, because what is wanted from the notion of the classical past keeps changing. And it's complicated because these changes themselves come from the impact on society of evolving notions of the classical ideal, like the priority of law or, on an abstract level, things like balance and harmony, and the beauty of structures that appear utterly simple but at the same time have a feeling of compressed, mighty power.

AR Is Piero della Francesca classical?

PLINY Yes. Another way to think about what 'classical' means is to see it as a sort of straining that art does at certain periods to imitate a much earlier form without really knowing what the form was.

AR Couldn't they just look at the real thing and modify the ideal to fit it?

PLINY If there weren't an ideal involved, they could, yes, but then they wouldn't be doing what you just asked. Not much classical art was aboveground in Piero's time – the stuff you see all over the world in your time was mostly excavated from the nineteenth century onwards. In fact, you're asking about accurate copying. I suppose it would be like painting a tree or a portrait. Let's say a tree, to keep it simple. You're saying something like, couldn't they paint the tree directly, without interpreting it? Maybe a photograph could do it better. But taking a photo involves interpretation. Maybe a surveillance camera is more neutral. But a tree captured on some surveillance footage might be stark and clear but not necessarily the best tree you could imagine, the most ideal tree. Better to get a good lens, and have a good eye, and get the tree in a good light. Then you could capture a tree to the absolute max of its treeness, like an ad for a tree, or the purest, most readable, perfect sign for a tree. And to do that you'd have to be making a lot of decisions, you'd need powers of interpretation, judgement and editing. So already you're idealising that tree.

AR Why are there classical gods in Renaissance paintings?

PLINY In the Renaissance, people at the top of the ladder of power and education might have believed a painting by Botticelli depicting gods and goddesses was the rebirth of an ancient type of greatness, but that belief was probably more like a game with certain rules and boundaries. The classical ideal emerged from people trying to engage with reality. Their purpose was to

understand it. Grasping it meant changing it. Artists in the Renaissance weren't expected to go around having feelings or tormenting themselves with their inner doubts: nobody cared what their feelings were, people cared about their skills. The powerful had art created by people they hired, so they could look at an altered reality, one that suited their self-image. Today we might call an idealised picture of reality, taking the form of lovely fictional deities, propaganda: the princes who commissioned *The Birth of Venus*, say, which is a weird new visualisation of ideas only just budding in philosophy about Christianity and paganism, were big power people who must not be fucked with. But there are all sorts of subtler penetrations and alterations, and these are submerged but more long lasting. They outlast the old power setups. This is only to describe what culture does anyway, but with classical art, the way it works is that to look forward, you look back – to be avant-garde in the Renaissance, you looked back a thousand years. With modern art, the relationship to the past is very different, because the presence of the past is disguised. You're overwhelmed by a lot of abstract shapes that seem utterly new.

AR What about having fun? What was it like being Roman? Did you puke in vomitoriums and have slaves, and fabulous wealth?

PLINY Not vomitoriums – they've recently been discovered to be fictional – but yes, slaves and conspicuous consumption, we enjoyed all that. You seem to be on the way to getting it all back, I notice, with your Power 100 lists in *ArtReview*. In my case, I had various governmental positions, running the navy and so forth, and at the same time I was a writer. I wrote a very good encyclopedia of every bit of knowledge I could think of, including stuff about interesting metals, and then, connected to that, sculptures made out of metal, and that was really the first bit of art history. I wrote about famous art collections of my time. There was a sculpture representing homosexual lovers who killed a tyrant after the tyrant started hitting on one of them: that's a complicated ideal because it involves eroticism and democracy. They were Greek heroes, but only crude Roman copies of the work exist in your time. They're not portraits of the lovers, exactly, more like hero stereotypes. I also wrote about a work that people believed was actually the *Laocoön*, which was dug up in Rome in the time of Michelangelo.

AR Well, you should know if it is or not!

PLINY Actually, is it really so interesting? For me, the compelling problem about your time is how you find a system of thought to understand the meaning of the big sales recently of Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol. One of them was \$42 million. Now those paintings are

GREAT CRITICS AND THEIR IDEAS

genuinely clever and good. But what do you do with the feeling of hatefulness about them when they're in those sales? You know they haven't been bought because of what is good about them, but because they're trophies for idiots. How can you live with that setup and celebrate it? Don't you want something less gruesome?

AR Do you think there's any classicism in modern art?

PLINY Yes, modern art isn't a sort of disproving of classicism, as many people imagine, like science disproving Jesus – there's lots of classicism in Picasso's and Braque's Cubism, for example. Actually there's a lot of Cubism in Piero, and Modernism in the Renaissance, and in the beautiful white forms of Greek sculpture. There's classicism in Donald Judd. Art history is always about old wine poured into new glasses.

AR What about classical art in *Modern British Sculpture*, currently on show at the Royal Academy here in London?

PLINY There's classicism in Barbara Hepworth, not just in the Cenotaph. The final spaces of the show are devoted to discursive proposals about whether something could possibly be art or not. This is to the exclusion of anything that has any substantial impact or meaning beyond a small group of people chatting to themselves, albeit in an interesting way. It's a mistake to imagine that every form art takes always encapsulates everything that came previously. Art now is a series of moves – and these moves don't necessarily bear the whole of art history or culture with them. To return to classicism, where there is an inevitable inbuilt sense of things staying still, actually surprise and newness are just as much a part of the picture. You might have a principle of the geometric or the timeless, in a dynamic tension with the natural or the spontaneous, but you have to keep refinding that ideal in a way that refreshes it or makes it surprising. It's no different really for Praxiteles than it is for Anthony Caro.

The classical ideal emerged from people trying to engage with reality. Its purpose was to understand it by picturing it, not just to provide a lovely holiday away from it. Grasping reality meant changing it, because what was apprehended or intuited now had a form, and the form had public understandability

AR Wow, this is great!

PLINY Thank you, and the use that art of any period makes of the past tells you about that period, yes, but all periods lead to the present, which in your case is the period of *Modern British Sculpture* and \$42m Lichtensteins, and in my case is the period of slaves and masters. Classical art isn't really just the Greeks and the Romans, it's a way of isolating certain aesthetic effects and following up implications of the effects in other dimensions, the political and the social, so you can think about them. And the thinking isn't like working out a problem to find an answer, it's more like constantly turning over the same material, so you're slightly changing all the time, and drawing conclusions all the time.

AR Excellent explanation of the deep meaning of art history, Pliny – thank you.♦

PLINY You're welcome, Matthew.

Next month: Kant explains negative space in Anthony Caro

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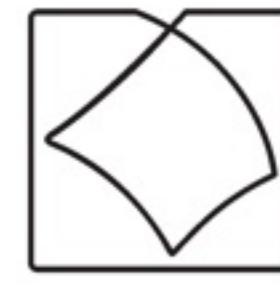
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MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART FROM THE ARAB WORLD



Abdulrahman Katani, "Balloons", mixed media, 268x65cm, 2011.



happy endings, 60in x 48in. oil on linen. 2010

Anne-Elizabeth Sobieski

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Sculptor? Composer? Both?
Neither? British artist
Haroon Mirza fuses
sound and installation into
indivisible wholes and – at
a time when each new
musical work seems no more
than a drop of water in an
ocean of downloads –
redeems the specificity of
individual musical pieces
by exploring their physical
trace as sculptural works of
art. But does that leave us
with something new or
merely expose the twin
deficiencies of music and
purely visual works of art?

–

WORDS: MARTIN HERBERT



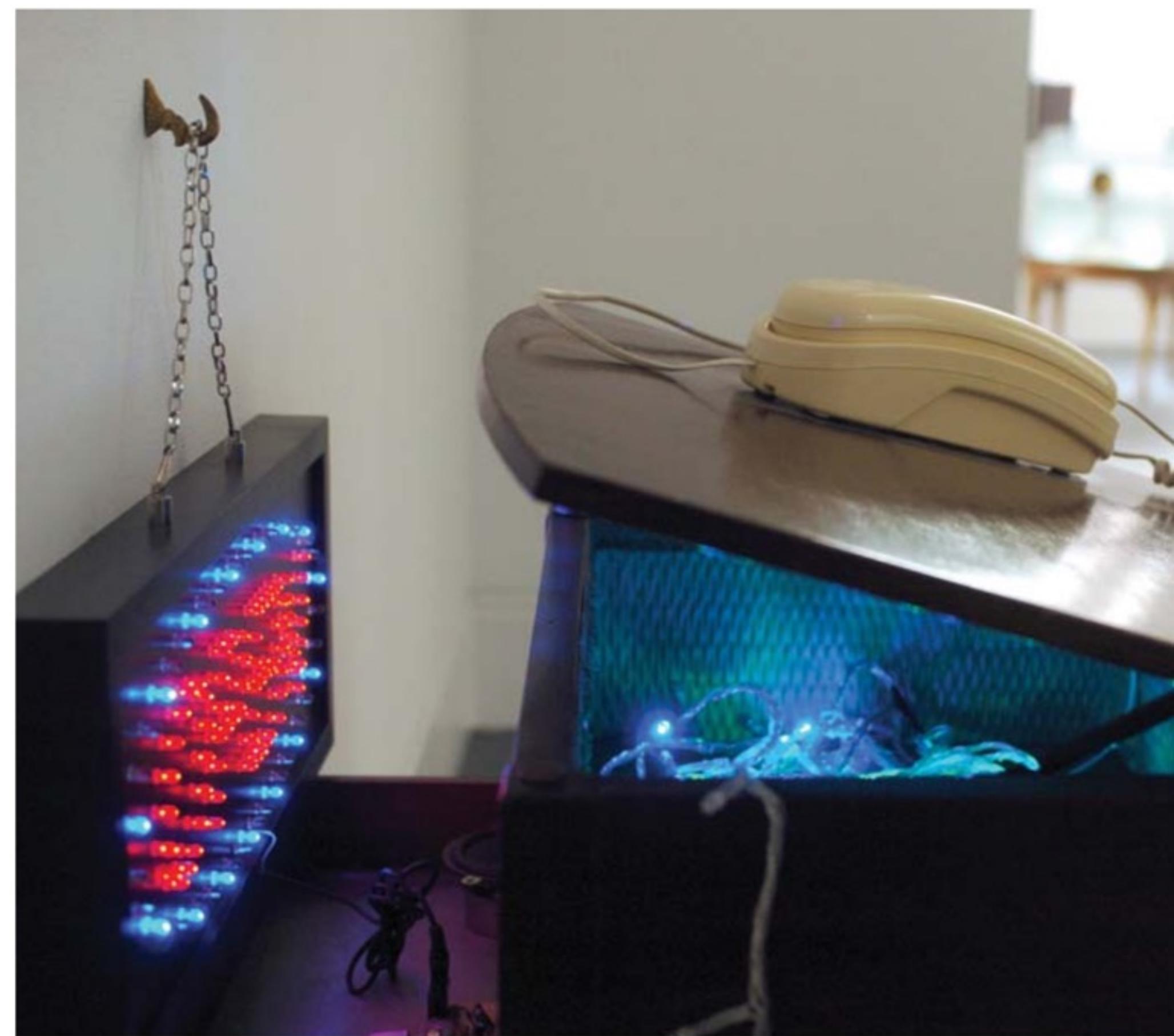


OVER THE PAST FEW DECADES, Johann Pachelbel's Canon in D major has served as the melodic reference point for all kinds of left-field musical moves. When Brian Eno copyrighted ambient music with *Discreet Music* (1975), there was the Canon – subjected to whispery algorithmic permutations that rendered it almost unrecognisable. When the 1984 film *Electric Dreams* called for a duet between a cellist and Edgar the sentient computer, there was the Canon, 8-bit bleeps and all. Needless to say, there's a Korean hip-hop version, too. Even so, it's arguable that no one has dismantled and rebuilt Pachelbel's beatific baroque composition more dramatically than Haroon Mirza. Others have made music out of the 300-year-old tune; the thirty-three-year-old English artist also turned it into sculpture.

Improvised into shape while Mirza was enrolled on a design MA at Goldsmiths (after first training as a painter and then making looped animations and photographs of seascapes that explored a kind of digital photorealism), *Canon Remix* (2006) sits casually on the floor, a tangle of cables and ingeniously hacked and tweaked everyday objects. A semideconstructed Discman, containing a CD in which the artist has separated the opening notes of the Canon onto individual tracks, rests precipitously on the lip of a black bucket of water that's being bombarded continually with ultrasonic vibrations. The switching device for the portable CD player's skip function dangles into the effervescent liquid, whose movement shuffles the tracks randomly; the resultant fragmented version of Pachelbel is percussively augmented, meanwhile, by other soundmaking "bits and bobs" (in Mirza's words), including an exposed, upturned, thrumming loudspeaker containing a rattling handful of coins.

Here, the optical and auditory are inextricable within a closed loop of pure functionalism: *Canon Remix* sounds how it does because of how it looks, and it looks that way in order to create those sounds. "In a way, I wasn't thinking about these works as artworks", says Mirza, sipping tea in his austere live/work pied-à-terre in East London, a perk of a fellowship (his other, busier studio is in Sheffield). "They were prototypes for things you might want in your house; instead of a hi-fi system, you'd have this thing for one piece of music. Music is so accessible now; you can download anything you like, but you're so far removed from how the thing was created. With my work, I very rarely record the sound separately: you have to be there to hear it." What might seem a retrograde idea in an age of instant downloads is, rather, a formula for a different kind of connectedness.

From this breakthrough point, Mirza's aesthetic – and conceptualising – would quickly expand, via audiovisual compositions often using items sourced from the artist's then-local market in Deptford, South London. (The interest in obsolescence they suggested was an upshot of pure pragmatism, he says: the outmoded tends to be inexpensive.) So the continuous overlapping metronomic pulses of *Open* (2007) apparently derive from the electromagnetic interference between the work's combination of a landline telephone, an LED sign and a string of coloured fairy lights. "Most of my music is the sound of electricity", notes Mirza. Elsewhere, he'd create miniature abstract concertos of clicks, pops and hums from the tetchy interaction of flashing lights, loudspeakers and the extended aerial of a radio spinning on a turntable and passing near a dangling illuminated lightbulb (as in various versions of *Sanctuary*, 2009), or forge a



beat from a run-off groove's intractable clunk. In each work, the dispersion of objects resolves into visual order when we see what it 'does', and the sound it makes resolves in turn, however briefly, into stutteringly syncopated musicality – reflecting modernist composer Edgard Varèse's dictum that 'music is organised sound'.

What we realise amid these flickeringly resolved works is that, first of all – and unexpectedly – there isn't a comfortable category for such an interstitial art-into-music position. Historically the crossover between art and music, from Luigi Russolo's futurist noisemaking machines, or *Intonarumori*, to the works of John Cage and Max Neuhaus, has been occasioned almost entirely by musicians and composers encroaching on the visual. Mirza is coming from the opposite direction and bringing a different audience with him. This could easily reduce to a bit of formalist territory-claiming. Instead, in a number of cases, his works become roomy containers for stacked inferences.

The installation *Adhān* (2009), for example, whose title comes from the Islamic call to prayer, is a multisection confab of the old and new (video projections, noisemaking used furniture triggered in part by a transparent cube containing condensing water). Its delicate interplay of clacks, guitar strums and cello is dominated by its video elements: a looped clip of Cat Stevens playing the introduction to a song in 1971, and a cellist performing a transcription of the Islamic muezzin call. "Cat Stevens – who I'd tried and failed to interview before making this piece – gave up music for Islam", says Mirza. "There are schools of thought in Islam that see music as bad, as encouraging dancing, which encourages sex. I wanted to point towards this contradiction in the faith: music is embedded in Islam – in the muezzin call, even in the rhythm and music of everyday actions." Previous commentators on Mirza's work have hitched his own religious upbringing to his interest in coordinating sound, seeing the latter as an allegorical plotting of order onto chaos. "It's obvious in a way. But I wouldn't say it's conscious. Quite early on, I rejected not just Islam but religious





Mirza sends his viewers spiralling between perceptual gaming, formalist elements, interacting references, and visual and auditory registers

faith in general, because I don't think there could be one god. I don't believe in a singularity: a creative force has to be two or more elements. I think that, ultimately, is something that appears in my work."

It's certainly evocative of how one navigates Mirza's voluminous, dynamics-rich, prolix art, which sends its viewers spiralling between perceptual gaming, formalist elements, interacting reference points, and visual and auditory registers. The relatively sparse installation *An_Infinato* (2009) fashions an aleatory, spatialised composition from the arrhythmic flutter of bats' wings in video rushes from Jeremy Deller's *Memory Bucket* (2003; Mirza previously worked as Deller's assistant), the rumble noise of damaged offcuts from Guy Sherwin's rhythmic abstract film *Cycles #1* (1972/77) and a wandering music caused by dangling an electronic keyboard's sensors halfway into a dustbin of water with a pump in it. Despite the multiple historical and cultural markers here, Mirza sees building a formal construct to insert references into as "too easy", and running through all of his productions is a theoretical point about cultural production that feels larger than the religious or formal inferences elsewhere. The artist imbued some Marshall McLuhan during his studies, and was struck by the late theorist's point about the 'ocular-centric' nature of Western civilisation:

"We rely more on what we see than what we hear, or smell, or whatever. McLuhan argues that this happened in two stages – first when we applied phonics, sounds, to objects, and second when we started writing – but that previous to this, visual and acoustic space was one perceptual mode, and now they've separated. And art, from its use in the Church to its adoption by the bourgeoisie and elevation as a superstructure, in Marxist terms, has a lot to do with that separation... So one of my things – it's not something I can do, it's not going to change anything, but I can do it in my practice and for myself – is to somehow think of acoustic space and visual space as one thing." This is no small conception of art – even when hedged about with caveats about its possibility. A newspaper, Mirza continues, paraphrasing McLuhan, is a form of acoustic space, a three-dimensional one –

material arriving from all over the world and landing in one place – and that's how his body of work feels too, in its determined refusal of a cardinal centre. Mirza, the market-stall rummager and denier of singularities, seems to want nothing blacklisted from his practice: from registers of making, to material culture, to the art of others.

This last aspect also plays into his awareness of the organic, delicate nature of artmaking. Having recently signed to London's Lisson Gallery and already received his share of plaudits – a few days after our conversation, he'll be awarded the Northern Art Prize ('Mirza combines old and new technology to create multi-layered installations which offer detailed examination and reflect the complexity of the modern world', in judge Mark Lawson's masterfully nebulous summing-up) – he seems intimately aware that an art career can become an inspiration-sapping treadmill. Hence Mirza's taste for collaborations, and his idea of the 'reverse readymade'. "It's about working with other people's art as any other material: if I'm using a table, it's the same as using a painting. I feel like I've built a language, a technical language and an aesthetic language, and in a way I could explore any subject using it. But that's not enough: it needs to develop and grow."

In his debut show at Lisson, the vivifying collaboration will transpire across the veil. Having rifled through the gallery's archives and lit upon sets of instructions for installing work by the late minimalist artist Fred Sandback, he's using those and replicating them with different – and more characteristically Mirza-esque – materials. So the install will include LEDs and UV lights, and, surely, it'll be musical; or you'll come to hear it that way. "For a long time", muses Mirza, "I found it really difficult to say to anyone that I was making things to make pieces of music. But that's the only way that I can rationalise it – otherwise I can't talk about it. If I was interested in making music on its own, I wouldn't be in a cold studio all the time. I'd be in my bedroom, or a warm studio! So there's something lacking in music –" He thinks about it, finds the shorthand. "But at the same time, there's something lacking in sculpture.":

An exhibition of work by Haroon Mirza is on view at Lisson Gallery, London, to 19 March

WORKS
(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

An_Infinato, 2009, mixed media

Open, 2007, mixed media

Canon Remix, 2006, mixed media

Sanctuary, 2009, mixed media

Adhān, 2008, mixed media

all images

Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery, London



does not say
I shall ~~affectionately~~ give it the most independent
little immortality
by
my first reasons
etc.





... from today? Revaluation of all values...

intoxication





and against the world they are reflections of his perfection



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Art today is exceptionally vibrant and dynamic, and nothing is more exciting than discovering artists of true talent on the verge of breaking through, or who have already broken through and are destined perhaps for great

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So, what's this Future Greats business all about? Well, as a result of much-discussed developments in communication technologies, the world is becoming a bigger place, and we are constantly flooded with new information and images. A consequence of this is that, while art magazines may be generally informed about exhibitions, projects and art events worldwide, no one can cover everything everywhere – not even, as we attempt to increase our global reach, what's going on in places closer to home. Indeed, it's easy to feel as ashamed of the amount of incredibly worthwhile work we never cover as it is to feel proud of the range of work we do write about.

For *ArtReview*, therefore, the annual Future Greats issue is an important forum for artists and curators who do not regularly contribute to the magazine to bring attention to practitioners who are producing intriguing work that is all too often overlooked – in the pages of magazines such as this one as much as anywhere else.

A sense of dialogue informs much of this writing about art, from those who assist and engage with artists to those who collaborate with and teach them. In this spirit, we open Future Greats with a text work in which artist Susan Hefuna responds directly to the art of Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian.

Despite the admittedly hyperbolic tone of the title, our Future Greats are not selected as part of a frantic quest to find the next artist who will rise up and become a dominant creative brand. Neither is it about *ArtReview* attempting to manufacture that type of phenomenon. Rather, it's about casting a spotlight on people who are producing work that seems to be different from things we've seen before.

We're extremely grateful to EFG International, the sponsors of this year's edition of Future Greats. Without their support, this expanded section of the magazine, the range of works it allows us to cover and the platform it gives to the artists featured within would not have been possible.

ArtReview

Intro

Contributors

Artists' CHOICE

Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian
by Susan Hefuna
Artist, New York, Cairo, Düsseldorf
page 84

Neil Hedger
by Nigel Cooke
Artist, Canterbury
page 86

Sadaharu Horio
by Dara Birnbaum
Artist, New York
page 87

Adam D. Miller
by Diana Thater
Artist, Los Angeles
page 88

Aaron Angell
by Ryan Gander
Artist, London
page 89

Susanne Bürner
by Heidi Specker
Artist, Berlin
page 90

Curators' CHOICE

Dan Miller
by Jamie Kenyon
Programmer, CCA Glasgow
page 91

Tobias Kaspar
by Stefan Kalmár
Director, Artists Space, New York
page 92

Phillip Lai
by Bart van der Heide
Director, Kunstverein München
page 93

Pilvi Takala
by Elena Filipovic
Curator, WIELS Contemporary Art
Centre, Brussels
page 94

Slavs and Tatars
by Adam Budak
Curator for contemporary art,
Kunsthaus Graz
page 95

Gene-George Earle
by Gavin Wade
Founding director,
Eastside Projects, Birmingham
page 96

Ed Atkins
by Kathy Noble
Curator (interdisciplinary projects),
Tate Modern, London
page 97

Helen Marten
by Beatrix Ruf
Director, Kunsthalle Zurich
page 98

Cally Spooner
by Andrew Hunt
Director, Focal Point Gallery,
Southend-on-Sea
page 99

Critics' CHOICE

Angel Otero
by Christian Viveros-Fauné
Critic, New York
page 100

Trevor Paglen
by Tyler Coburn
Critic/Artist, Los Angeles
page 102

Kate Levant
by Chris Sharp
Critic, Paris
page 103

Maria Loboda
by Laura McLean-Ferris
Critic, London
page 104

Laura Buckley
by Martin Herbert
Critic, Tunbridge Wells
page 105

Elizabeth Price
by J.J. Charlesworth
Critic, Folkestone
page 106

Maria Georgoula
by Oliver Basciano
Critic, London
page 107

Jan Tichy
by Jonathan T.D. Neil
Critic, New York
page 108

E
LL U
NIVERSITY
MONIR SHAH
ROUDY FARMAN
FARMAIAN ARTIST
PARSONS SCHOOL FOR
DESIGN SKETCH COLOR BII
DS FLOWERS GARDEN SPRING
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COLORS CATSKILLS FALL NIMA FRIENDS COTTAGE
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ANFARMAIAN MIRROR GLASS LIFE NIMA WINDOW WORK
ABOL CENTRAL PARK CHICAGO COLUMBIA MOUSTACHE
FRIEND NEW YEAR PARTY PLAZA HOTEL MONIR LOVE BIRDS GAR
DEN MIRROR PINK RED ABOL IRAN LIFE MARRIAGE WORLD LANDS
CAPE MONIR SHAHROUDY FARMANFARMAIAN DECISION DRESS ABOL BIRDS

MONIR SHAH
ROUDY FARMANFARMAI
AN ZAHRA NIMA AZIZ DARYA GAR
DEN BIRDS DREAM SEA MIRROR RIVER TAREK
MONIR ZAHRA FLOWERS TOURAN TAJ CROWN MAH
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IRISES BUTTERCUPS EVENING SUN GLASS WINDOWS HASSAN
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PATIENCE AYATOLLAH SHAHROUDY ANSWERS QUESTIONS MONIR
SHAHROUDY FARMANFARMAIAN FRUIT TREES PEACH APPLE MULBER
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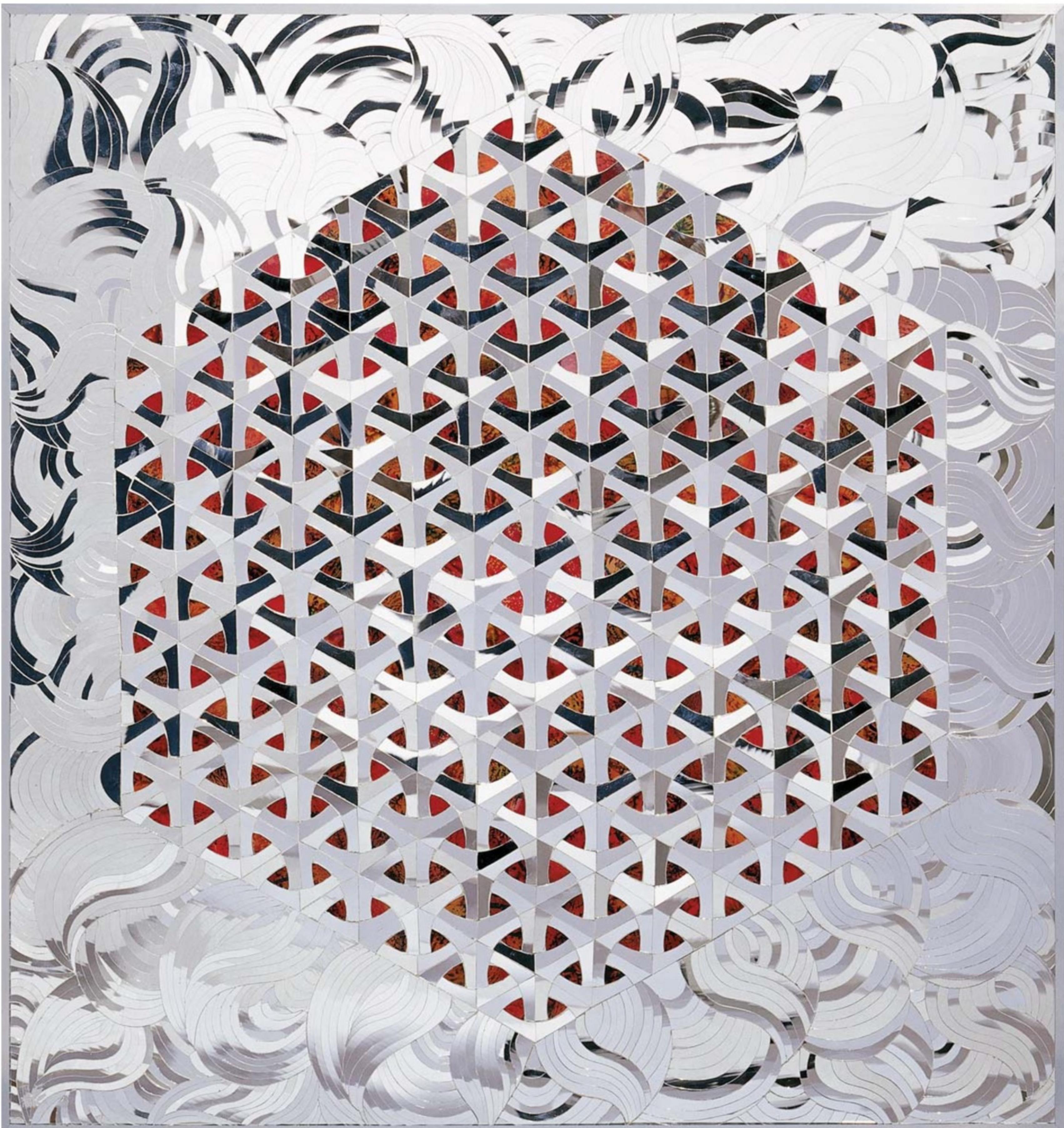
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CONTEMPORARY ART JACKSON POLLOCK WILLEM DE KOONING MARK ROTH
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RECTION HEXAGON HEPTAGON OCTAGON DODECAGON TRIANGLE
SQUARE CIRCLE MONIR EVER MONIR SHAHROUDY FARMANFARMAIAN

Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian

by
Susan
Hefuna

Excerpt from a self-titled monograph by Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist.
To be published in autumn 2011 by Works on Paper, the Third Line, Dubai, and Damiani Editore, Bologna

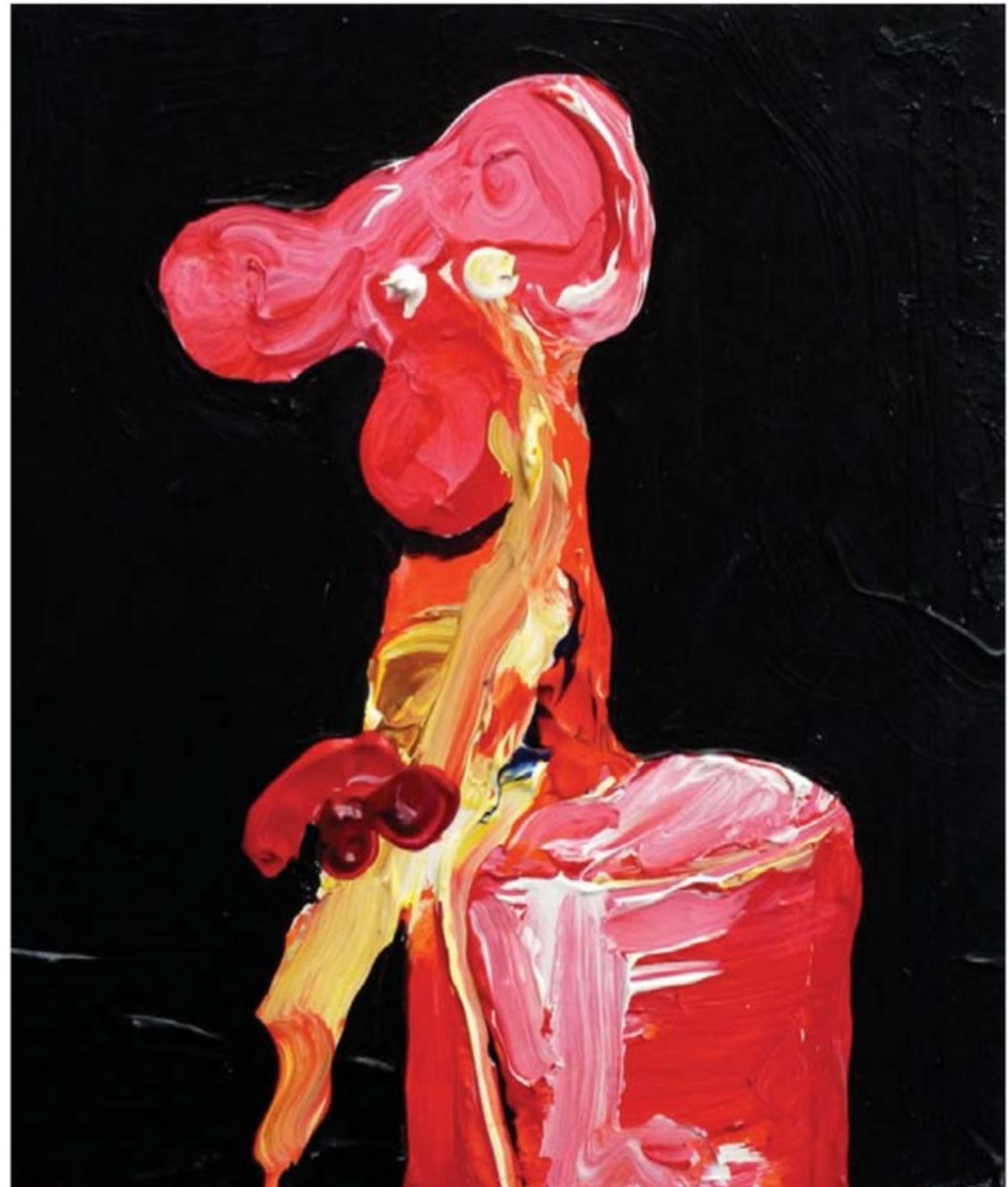
Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, *Amol, Variation on Hexagon*, 2005, mirror, reverse-glass painting and plaster on wood, 98 x 92 x 3 cm. Courtesy the artist and the Third Line, Dubai



Neil Hedger:

It may seem obvious to state that Neil Hedger's subject is sculpture, given that he has produced a large body of work that is mainly three-dimensional. But there's much more to it than that: the process of material aggrandisement, inherent in the construction of monuments, provides the backdrop to his making, becoming a critical target for the quicksilver manual thought that brings the characters in his sculptures to life, while still comprising the DNA of the artist's technical competence.

The phallocentric tradition of permanent monolithic commemoration – towering lumps of rock or metal in the shape of people – is worked over to a pulp, until the ego within it all is reduced to a screaming blob on a stick. The eviscerated monuments that Hedger leaves us with call up other associations from this point – there's a sense of curdled foodstuffs, offal even; yesterday's confectionary mixed up with a child's Plasticine experiments, or a scented candle left to liquefy all over the furniture. The splattering velocity of their visual surface is misleading, though: up close, Hedger unfolds an exquisiteness of touch and visual wit that rhymes armatures and formal extrusions with



mutilated limbs, shackles and streaks of urine. Casual-seeming marks turn out to be placed with great care to disrupt any clarity of scale; a shabby cardboard pedestal may in fact be delicately painted bronze. Imagine a de Kooning painting come to life and put to work in a pole-dance club and you get a sense of how the figurines present themselves. The poor things call to mind the jiving swagger of the media celebrity in decline, itself an allegory for Hedger's questions around the legitimacy of heritage, the transience or permanence of materials and the artist's dubious requirements of each.

In a recent move into painting, Hedger has doubled up his hold over the vanity of his hapless characters by commemorating them via portraiture. Produced with similar immediacy, the materials outgun the gravitas of the 'sitter' once again – compare the two at the launch of London's Debut Contemporary gallery in March, and *Janus Youth* at the capital's Redchurch Street Gallery in June.

by
Nigel
Cooke



Sadaharu Horio:

Sadaharu Horio, born in 1939 in Kobe, is a third-generation Gutai artist and a pioneer in modern Kobe performance art. His influence on Japan's contemporary art scene is significant, although unfortunately in Western exhibition contexts he occupies only a modest, understated position.

Horio's goal, however, has little to do with attaining fame: his focus is on praxis. He constantly challenges his audience's ideas about art, deconstructing the idea of a product-based outcome and enhancing the meaning of critical artistic practice. In one performance (opening the group show *Game Over*, Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999), Horio hammered spikes through copies of *Artforum* magazine. Following another performance (at the opening of *Fighting Spirit*, at the Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa, in 2007), the audience lined up at Horio's art 'vending machine' to deposit coins and receive original artworks, selected from 11 categories of 'everyday things'. In a work called *Painting Ritual* (2007), at the same exhibition, the public was invited to paint over a variety of everyday

objects. Each new layer of paint further abstracted and buried the chosen objects, marking a union between art and everyday life.

What Horio does has little to do with painting in the strict sense of the word, but rather with the ritual of an ever-repeating practice. His attempt is to deal with *Ordinary Things*, as his 2002 exhibition at the Ashiya City Museum of Art and History was called. In that show, the boundary of each piece was made uncertain and unclear; 'works' were scattered throughout the spaces and the yard, challenging the notion that they were permanent, stable objects.

Horio's exhausting pace – he puts together some 100 exhibitions and performances each year – reinforces the sense that the exhibition is not a special moment for him but rather an extension of his everyday living. The idea of 'groping' to find his way through ritualised practice would seem to be something very necessary in today's artworld, which has become much too product-bound. Horio's way of constantly challenging both audience and art institution is an absolute necessity, as much needed today as when the Gutai group was first founded. It is thus time that his recognition spreads further among Western art contexts.

by
Dara Birnbaum





Adam D. Miller:

Adam Miller was one of my students some years ago, and then, some time after he had left, I curated an exhibition entitled *Why Are We Doing This?*, which I invited Adam to be in. Adam's response to my invitation was to curate a show within my show – *The Night Goat Demands Reparations* – and to use it as an opportunity to work with other artists and to show their work within a greater discussion. This is typical of Adam's approach. He's just the coolest person in the world, and has a DIY approach to everything: he writes all the exhibition materials, essays and publications for his group shows and hand-screens the covers for all of these. Because, saying all this, he's really a painter. I particularly like the paintings in

which he makes the canvas look like sewn skin – and these seem to be related to two of his interests: he's a very strict vegan who does a lot of work for PETA, so he's someone who is very concerned about the treatment of animals; but at the same time he's really into these horror movies full of zombies and gore, and often features images from these films in his work.

Adam is one of those artists who believes that his practice includes belonging to a group of like-minded people and acting as a catalyst for the work of others as well as working alone. The energy other artists put into promoting themselves, he puts into promoting a working group with shared interests. Adam is what I wish every artist would be – someone who invests his time and energy and spirit into art (and not into shoring up the capitalist box constructed for us called a 'career' – as if we were lawyers). I could be happier in a world with more Adam Millers and fewer Jeff Koonses – in fact many Adams and no Jeffs would be awesome.

by
Diana
Thater



from top: *Cathedral of Malice*, 2010, water-based dye, bleach, enamel, twine on stretched muslin, 203 x 216 cm; *Jason (Ride the Knife)*, 2010, water-based dye, acrylic silkscreen on muslin stretched over panel, 91 x 112 cm

Aaron Angell:

Which artists should I be aware of?

Eigen Pound
 DIEGO RIVERA
 JOSE CLEMENTE OROZCO
 DAVID ALFARO SIGUEROS
 Mark Dion
 P. Diddy aka P. Davies
 Brueghel
 JOHN MAHMA
 YOUR MUM *wtf@the line?*
 Paul Skin back. Robert
 Rauschenberg
 Andrew Stahl
 Paul Richards
 Neil Jeffries
 PICASSO
 Van Gogh, Ben Resnick.
 Saint John of the Cross
 DANNY FOX
 GERT & WILLE TRAUTS
 Pierre Huyghe
 NICK CAVE
 Giacometti
 Dali
 Nanjiune Pak
 Jonas Burgert —

Dean Eisner
 LYDIA CLARK
 MATT CORSON
 Ged Quinn
 Julian Rosefeldt
 MATTHEW BARNEY
 Joseph Beuys
 TOM SACHS
 Joseph Griffiths!
 THE MINUTEMEN
 Leonard Foujita
 Tokashi Murakami
 THAT IS NOT THE SPECIAL
 OF MY NAME!
 Paul Tall
 MICHAEL KREBBER
 MARTIN KIPPENBERGER
 DIETER ROTH
 ROSMARIE TROCKEL
 RICHARD ESTES
 Amy Yeo
 JEAN SHIN
 SARAH OPPENHEIMER
 gerhard Ropke
 RAYMOND HILLION
 G. MONTEVERDI



They must put something in the food in the Slade canteen that allows artists to think sideways, upside down and inside out, because the school seems to continually spit them out. Artists whose work is so highly idiosyncratic and perimeterless in its possibilities that it gives you a feeling of urgency and panic, like the desperation to come up for air after being held under.

The first time I met Aaron was by chance in the Golden Heart in Spitalfields. He told me there was a job coming up at the Slade: he was trying to persuade me to apply for it. I voiced the opinion that a good art school could just be a warm room, and that the best tutors are almost certainly always the people sitting directly next to you; usually your friends. Aaron had started me thinking, and on the realisation that he was sitting next to me and that I had quite a large warm room of my own, namely a studio, maybe something should be done. Night School, a monthly free salon, opened its doors last December, inaugurated with a lecture by Aaron entitled *Delphic Content: Image Dumps and the Aesthetics of Web Anonymity*, in which he discussed the

phenomenon of image blogs and their use by what could be seen as a sort of modernised notion of a Sunday painter.

If jealousy is a good measure of achievement, *Morning Alarm* (2010) – an alarm for an iPhone based on the music which plays when Number Six wakes up in the Village at the beginning of most episodes of *The Prisoner* (1967–8) – is quite simply a work that I kick myself for not making. That, and *Black Photocopier* (2010), literally a large photocopier free for people to use in the gallery, and *Brother Francis Spills His Pint* (2010), a chalk pastel drawing of a children's Catholic cartoon character.

Among Aaron's early output, I've witnessed painting, installation, performance, writing, photography, as well as Web-specific works, but above all what really strikes me about him is his ability to make stuff happen: having an integral part in the Slade occupancy (a protest against university grant cuts), as well as organising shows and salons of his own, Web archives and writings, etc. He's an executer, a doer, and his collaborations and relations with other creative practitioners from all fields are so many and of such complexity that it sometimes seems hard to unravel them, leaving you wondering exactly who made what. The point is, they don't care who made it, they just want to see something good happen. There is something in the work that gives me a sense of a young Brodthaers (if Brodthaers had indeed ever been a young artist as opposed to a young poet). Many of Aaron's works appropriate the device of colliding unexpected components that make you sit up with a jolt, but chosen with such ingenuity that when they collide they make a clang loud enough to leave your ears ringing.

by
**Ryan
 Gander**



investigates the emotionally charged nature of place. The video *The Immortals* (2011), for example, consists of animated photographs of a deserted school, formerly used for military secret service. Her publication *LEAVES* (boabooks, 2011), meanwhile, provides the reference material for a 2009 video of the same name, which presents a meadow within a park as the stage for an imaginary drama. Bürner displays her videos using a projector – what was formerly called a 'magic lantern' – and the idea of magic brings me back to the promises of Smaragd and also to the main character of Bürner's images: being out of character, being open to misunderstanding, speaking in the dark.

by
Heidi
Specker

Susanne Bürner:

I can't remember exactly how I met Susanne Bürner the first time, but it was a decade ago, and in Berlin. A lot of artists moved over from Karlsruhe at that time, after studying at the academy there, and at first Bürner was just one person in this big, divergent posse. After a while, she was living in my neighbourhood, telling me about long nights in a bar next door called Smaragd, which means 'emerald'. (Perhaps, I thought, the landlord wanted to reference the tones of Fassbinder and the 1970s.) It sounded interesting; but to be honest, we never made it there. Instead of that, I made it into Bürner's work: her photographs, videos and books. I saw myself in the mirror of her work, which reminded me of my own, and

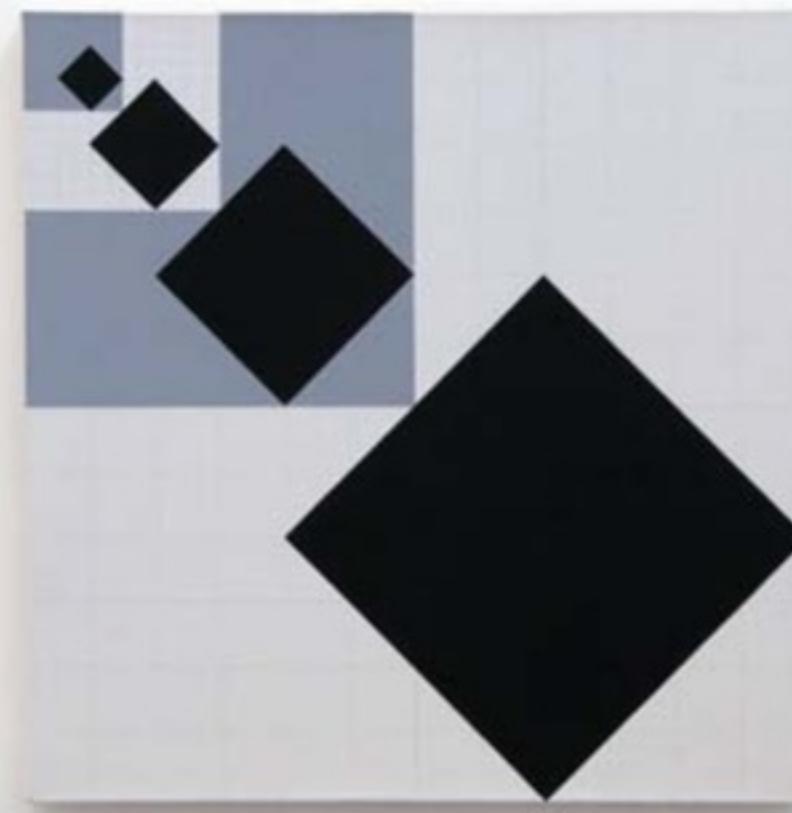


Dan Miller:

When I first encountered Dan Miller's work, he was producing a number of sculptures and small collages for a forthcoming show at artist-led space +44 141, in Glasgow. One of these meticulously assembled works on paper, *Camouflage Structure* (2007), contains a disruptive pattern incorporating two faunlike figures, one slightly increased in scale as though magnified along an axis bisecting the image. The figures' awkward duplication presents us with a complex visual cipher, suggesting the possibility that the same form might also constitute its accompanying camouflage.

Miller frequently produces and reproduces facsimiles of his own and appropriated works. In *Still Life* (2008) he takes two 'paint your own' canvases, working simultaneously on both, mark for mark, carrying out a chain of exercises to create 'twinned' paintings rather than a diptych. These codes of mirroring, repetition and disguise emphasise a function of reading that exists between the production and reception of an artwork, a process defined by encryption and deciphering – one that inevitably presents a potential gap in communication between artwork and viewer.

His recent works, *Composition in Three Parts*, *Untitled* and *Blue Angel I & II* (all 2010), produced during a CPH AIR residency in



Copenhagen, further emphasise Miller's revealing of the 'void' within, or beyond, the painted plane. Drawing from the design motifs used in the branding of the Aldi supermarket chain, which in turn reference Concrete art and De Stijl, Miller develops a series of geometric patterns floating upon a complex framework of lines, the grid providing a skeletal underpinning for pictorial and chromatic arrangement. Much like Miller's earlier collages, these works coax the viewer to consider the space beyond the image, where tessellating patterns converge to form an infinite motif.

by
Jamie
Kenyon

Tobias Kaspar:



Tobias Kaspar's recent works are informed by a pair of French artists who are currently *en vogue*, yet still somewhat underacknowledged: Philippe Thomas (1951–95) and his fictitious agency Readymades Belong to Everyone, and André Cadere (1934–78), with his performative interventions. Both artists have, in certain circles, long been regarded as cult figures, but have fallen out of the loop of recent discourse. Berlin-based Kaspar is taking their legacy as a starting point – picking up the stitch where it was dropped. His work *Lumpy Blue Sweater* (2010), for example, negotiates the mechanisms that create the notion of author and authority, as well as the underlying sociopolitical conditions that inform the production and the distribution of both.

Lumpy Blue Sweater brings together a blue pullover, a small booklet and a series of 18 colour photographs. The booklet includes a monologue about the cycles of the fashion industry that magazine editor Miranda Priestly delivers in the film *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006). The work's title itself is taken from

Miranda: "Oh. Okay. I see. You think this has nothing to do with you. You go to your closet and you select... I don't know... that lumpy blue sweater, for instance, because you're trying to tell the world that you take yourself too seriously to care about what you put on your back. But what you don't know is that that sweater is not just blue, it's not turquoise. It's not lapis. It's actually cerulean. And you're also blithely unaware of the fact that in 2002, Oscar de la Renta did a collection of cerulean gowns..." (etc). The photographs are taken from the apartment of collector Ghislain Mollet-Viéville during André Cadere's exhibition *Etablir le Désordre (To Establish Disorder)* (1977), showing a woman in a blue sweater holding one of Cadere's *Barres de Bois Rond* (1970–8). Each photograph is accompanied by one of the 18 chapters from French author Guy de Maupassant's *Bel Ami* (1885), a novel that charts the social and professional ascent of a journalist in Paris, whose success is owed to a woman who secretly writes the journalist's articles for him.

As de Maupassant did in *Bel Ami*, Kaspar plays virtuously with aspirations as well as the modern notion of progress. *Lumpy Blue Sweater* can be read as a parable of how progress might be possible beyond (radical-chic) fashions: how one can maneuver between the possibilities of ending up either as a bourgeois bore or by committing suicide in a mental asylum.

by
Stefan
Kalmár



Phillip Lai:

Over the last year, the notion that kept popping up as the ultimate critical deathblow for artworks and exhibitions was 'sentimentality'. Whatever happened to the classical notion of *pathos* in contemporary evaluation? Has the growing entrenchment of institutional critique today pushed the art producer into his last stand as an aesthetic strategist, aiming for institutional nuance and white-cube refinement? The work of Phillip Lai appears to answer in the affirmative. As it happens, the Kuala Lumpur-born, London-based artist's appropriation of readymade objects is concrete and analytic – displaying their orientation within the social, economic and cultural parameters of the gallery space. However, what makes his work alive and continuously interesting to my eyes is that it portrays an artist in search of a meaning of which he himself does not claim to be able to fully explain.

The everyday objects in Lai's spatial assemblages seem to have chosen him instead of the other way around – comparable to the way Duchamp always described his early readymades. They are inspired by the artist's casual encounters with his surroundings, via images, street situations or communal spaces.

These encounters generate a process of artistic depiction of found materials that appear to be on the verge of collapsing altogether.

For his 2009 London exhibition at Modern Art, Lai recreated the contents of a small truck in the gallery space, placing them in a grubby display case, which contained a rubber tyre, a large crumpled sheet of dusty polythene and a piece of wood stretched across the inset chamber, as if keeping its sides standing up. For this same occasion Lai cast a set of variously sized mattresses, balls, bottles and a baseball bat in sponge foam. Another work featured the outlines of a London corner shop in aluminium frames resting, unfixed, upon a number of fruit stones.

What these works have in common is that they all claim to represent everyday life and simultaneously thematise an advanced vulnerability throughout this process. The introduction of the readymade is normally understood as an artistic strategy to subvert an artistic aura. With Lai's readymade objects, this artistic sentiment seems to be introduced anew, including the moral and aesthetic examination that come with it. Hence Lai lays bare a sentimental ambiguity at the base of his artistic production and within the formal codes of institutional critique, making his work a challenging proposition in today's artistic labour.

by
Bart van der
Heide



Pilvi Takala:



Pilvi Takala is, one could say, a rule breaker. Except the rules she breaks are not actually clearly inscribed in a society's codes of conduct. Instead, her work explores conduct enforced but not necessarily written down or even discussed – strictures that are perhaps not even known as 'rules' until she exposes them. The young Finnish artist furtively stages social situations that run counter to some unspoken societal convention, documenting her acts in films, installations or books. In the process, her seemingly harmless yet inevitably subversive gestures touch at the very core of how politics, culture and society quietly function.

Once, she dressed herself as Snow White and queued for entry to France's Euro Disney, only to be stopped by guards. In *Real Snow White* (2009), video footage of her attempt to buy a ticket and enter – after having graciously signed autographs and posed for pictures with excited children waiting in line with her – reveals the inability of Euro Disney employees to adequately explain why she should be treated differently than any other visitor who wants to visit the themepark. Takala-as-Snow-White, it seems, looked just too much like the real thing (no matter that Snow White is not even 'real', as she points out).

The recorded discomfort of Disney employees and even some parents thus exposes what no one dares articulate: in the microcosm of society that is Euro Disney, the order of things is maintained through the strict policing of a fantasy that depends on everyone knowing who is playing a role, and who is not.

For *The Trainee* (2008), Takala assumed the identity of a new office trainee in a Finnish company's marketing department. At the beginning of her monthlong stay, she acts like a typical marketing trainee, but some weeks into her training, she basically stops working. She is 'thinking', she replies to anyone who asks (and many do). But her acts, or rather her absence of acts (indeed, the lack of any quantifiable or 'acceptable' work activity), slowly make the trainee a questionable, even dangerous, element in the company. Hidden-camera videos and other documentation reveal the discomfort, speculation and whispered controversy she provokes among colleagues. Before long, the trainee's lack of a visible work ethic or, perhaps more importantly, her refusal to mask inactivity as do so many others (think of all the office employees pretending to work while actually consulting Facebook), reveals some of the implicit rules – and lies – of that very pillar of modern society, the workplace.

by
Elena
Filipovic





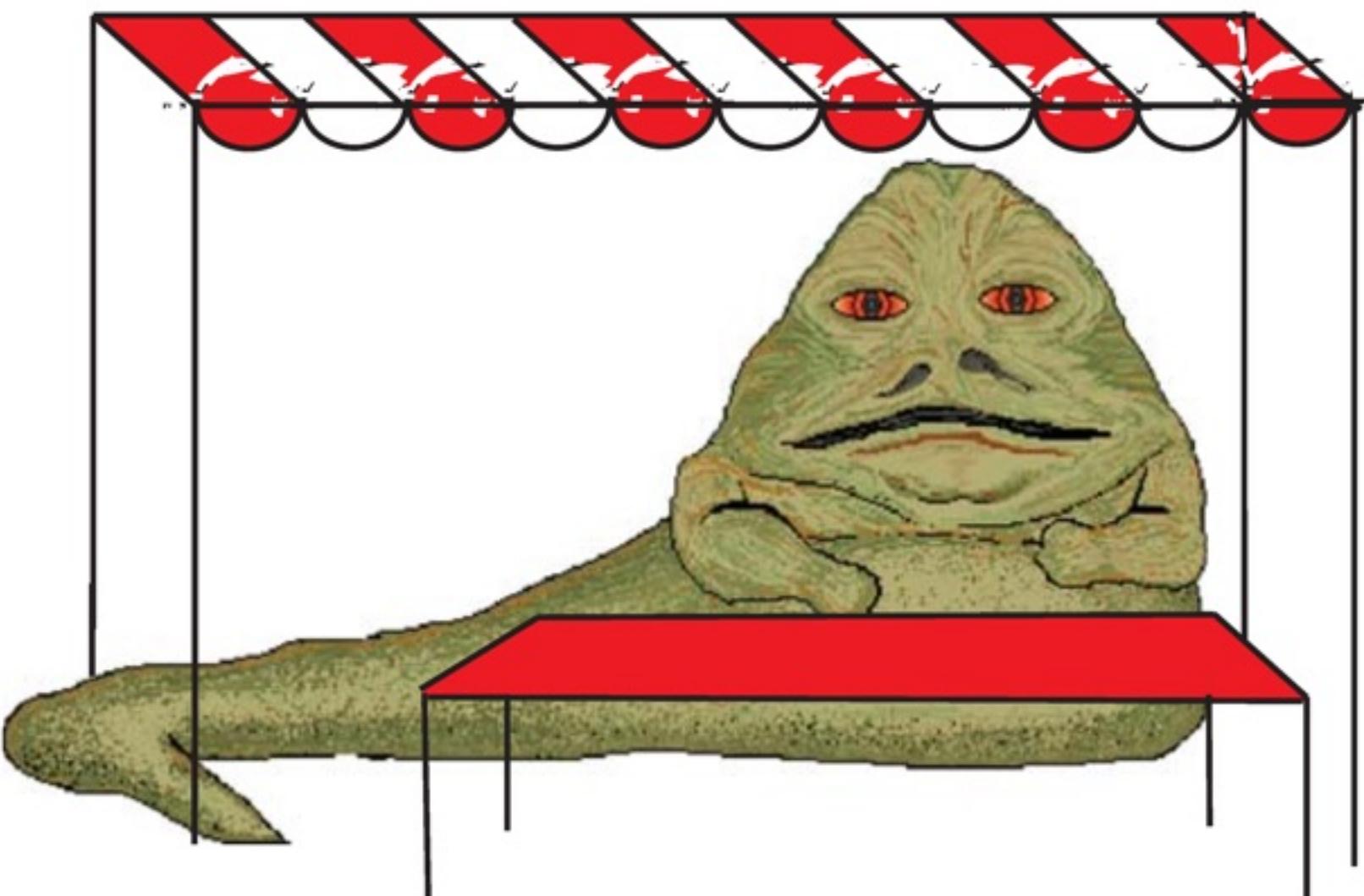
Slavs and Tatars:

'If history is written by the victors, will the future be written by the defeated?' ask Slavs and Tatars, a collective founded in 2005 by a Texas-born Iranian and a Pole, and focused on history's marginal, often-forgotten moments and geography's liminal sites (and in particular on what they describe as 'an area east of the former Berlin Wall and west of the Great Wall of China known as Eurasia'). Practising a sort of post-Pop anthropology in the neopunk costume of a quasi-educational endeavour, spiced also with a neo-Dada politics of slapstick and the carnivalesque, Slavs and Tatars smoothly travel between a variety of primarily research-based forms including writing, graphic design, performative acts and lectures. Their Book Works publication and exhibition *Kidnapping Mountains* (2009) is a unique, wannabe-sophisticated, Lonely Planet-style exploration of the cultural legacy of that 'mountain of languages' – the Caucasus region. Here, in another chapter of Slavs and Tatars's collective process of identity-search hysteria, is a mélange of historiography and tourism in which critical nostalgia is applied as a tool to subvert post-national narratives from within and to jump over a mythical Eurasian vernacular.

Slavs and Tatars' new, multiplatform project, *Friendship of Nations: Polish Shi'ite Showbiz*, currently awaiting its final expression at the forthcoming Sharjah Biennale, is a comparative study that examines the unlikely heritage between Poland and Iran, from seventeenth-century Sarmatism to the 2009 Green Movement in Iran. Jammed together here are archival materials (a letter from the Ayatollah Khomeini to the Pope, a record of *Bomb Iran* by Vince Vance and the Valiants); canonical artworks (original constructivist posters and Qajar paintings, among others) and the artists' own sculptural, print and audio work and talks, referring to both the 1979 Iranian Revolution and Poland's Solidarnosc movement in the 1980s. Supplementing these with research into cultural habits and styles (such as, for instance, an analysis of the sex appeal of the monobrow in Muslim and Christian countries), Slavs and Tatars map – with typical wit and intellectual sharpness – a barely known terrain of cross-cultural and nationalist epiphanies. Their new book, *Slavs and Tatars Presents Molla Nasreddin: The Magazine That Would've, Could've, Should've* (JRP/Ringier), published this month, contains a selection of the best 200 or so pages – published for the first time in English – from the legendary early-twentieth-century Azeri political satire, perhaps the most important Muslim publication of the last century, with illustrations suggesting a Daumier or Toulouse Lautrec of the Caucasus. Next year, meanwhile, Slavs and Tatars will mount a solo show at the Vienna Secession.

by
Adam
Budak





Gene-George Earle:



Gene-George Earle is one of a number of great new hopes in Birmingham's increasingly populous art scene. Taking the Future Greats principle at face value, I am gambling on telltale signs of great things to come in the South African-born, twenty-three-year-old artist's work: unpredictability countered by sharp intuitive thrusts into the spaces of art. The first time I came across Earle's slippery, beguiling practice he was delivering an anecdotal lecture about a moment of lost love in gripping detail, where he sure-footedly retold his spiral of losing control. He showed early promise.

It is a delight to ask him what he is working on at the moment. His replies, ranging from attempts to track down the origins of a particular North Korean wrapping paper to conversations with a Subway street sign holder, always open up the imagination to second guessing where he will take the idea. And he can follow through. Hearing about his interest in the working life of a sign holder, I invited him to make a work for Eastside Projects. This combined with a distanced dialogue with Liam Gillick and their shared interest in decimal time:

consequently, in late 2010, Earle produced a new shared-advertising-space street sign to be held outside the gallery during opening hours by Touseef Saleem, the Subway sign holder Earle had befriended. A clock designed by Gillick for Earle was mounted on the sign, alongside Subway's and our own adverts, and the opening hours of Eastside Projects, 12–5pm. This clock ran according to a decimal twenty-hour day (five of these hours lasting 60 minutes longer than five standard hours), adding an extra hour to our daily opening times for the duration of the show.

Earle's works deliver a nuanced negotiation of territories of display, exchange and social interaction. His recent project at Vinyl, a tiny artist-run gallery in Birmingham, continued his interest in informal economies, leading him to locate and hire a dwarf entertainer to inhabit the space. This initial impulse fuelled a series of woodworking attempts to recontextualise the practice of Ken Isaacs's 1960s modular design work against current demands for economising space and the creation of sustainable living. Always interesting, always surprising, Earle continues to promise much.

by
Gavin
Wade





Ed Atkins:

Ed Atkins comes across as a writer who makes art. His body of work includes screenplays, audio, and videos that are the visual equivalent of a poem: sentences of image and sound are layered rhythmically, punctuated by repeated motifs. They seem structured by a kind of anti-logic in which pace is crucial, as the London-based artist forms sequences of crescendos (such as a fast tracking shot of a snow-covered forest, to the climactic sounds of a washing machine's spin cycle) that suddenly cut away before completion. One moment the screen could be filled with a romantic skyline, the next with crisp chroma-green. A Slade MFA graduate, Atkins had his first solo show at Cabinet, London in January, was selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2010 and is currently a LUX Associate Artist.

His most recent work, a trilogy entitled *Death Mask*, evolved after witnessing the death of his father. Yet if anything, as the layers of

crystalline colour in the video *Death Mask II: The Scent* (2010) flow – as a bright orange, lemon-shaped object moves horizontally in and out of focus on a black screen, overlaid with dramatic organ-like drones, then turns acid yellow and multiplies, creating concentric kaleidoscope patterns accompanied by a mournful lilt – it delivers a feeling of elation. Atkins filmed these inanimate objects as part of a wider meditation on “that instant, or that transition between life and death, of becoming an image and a representation of a person – being able to look at a body that is devoid of being – seeing this person leave suddenly, to be replaced by just an object.” His understanding of how sound shapes image is also acute: by juxtaposing electronic and acoustic music with everyday noise (echoing John Cage), the aural human presence becomes potent – coughs, clicks, fumbling and blurry conversations add intimate emotion and tactility.

Overall, Atkins uses paradox as a revelatory tool: by combining classic structuralism with Hollywood sound motifs, high-definition video with visceral materiality, and pleasure with no climax, he forms plaintive collages spliced with moments of hyperreal ecstasy.

by
Kathy
Noble





Helen Marten:

When I saw Helen Marten's work for the first time, I was immediately interested in the particular freedom she takes in her use of codes and languages. I see in her work a change from what we know of artists and the way that they employ references, something that has become very popular since the Internet became the primary tool for research. We've already seen artists who reference the histories of art, design and architecture, but now, with Marten's work, it's more like we're seeing the Internet as a life tool – something that has equal reality to that of the physical realm. I was very impressed by the sureness in her use of materials and particular iconic images and signs.

In *All the Single Ladies* (2010), Marten

has taken defunct mobile phone handsets and set them in pale pink cast Corian (a product commonly used for everything from kitchen surfaces to architectural cladding), with eyebrows and lips that look as though they were taken from Betty Boop's face engraved into the surface. *George Nelson* (2009) is a screenlike structure made from Plexiglas in the kinds of colours employed by the famous American designer after which the work is named, though it also seems as though it might have been constructed using some kind of kit. In works such as these, Marten applies handicraft to prefabricated material, mixing up art, design and production history with items that you find in digital information or comics. What this amounts to is a very visual form of storytelling. It's almost archaeology, and at the same time, it's always from the present. Her work considers not only global codes and languages, but who owns these things. Who owns tartan? And who owns a particular beige tartan? This is a wonderfully humorous way of critiquing the reference system in art with which we have become so familiar, and also of highlighting how the ways in which the visual has become coded have changed everything.

by
Beatrix
Ruf



from top: *The Advent of a World Class Economy*, 2009-10 (installation view, Lisson Gallery, London), carved polystyrene, fibreglass, self-firing clay, airline teaspoons, fabric, chipboard, ball-chain, 40 x 90 x 65 cm; *George Nelson*, 2010, powder-coated aluminium, butterfly nuts, plastic caps, anodised box section, tropical wood, Vogue pattern PVC suit jacket, 230 cm x 100 cm (background: *Minty!* (cuttin' ma milk teeth)), 2010. Both courtesy T293, Naples

Cally Spooner:

Cally Spooner is a writer, artist, playwright, curator and serial collaborator, whose work neatly avoids being confined to these categories. As an artist, she produces performative readings and extroverted contemplations of her own written dialogues to script the anxieties and slippages involved in turning thought into text, text into action and action into self-contained dramas. Spooner uses a variety of philosophers, theorists and writers – among them Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Hannah Arendt and F. Scott Fitzgerald – as ‘alibis’ to help her write, and uses casts of people – including Will Holder, Richard Parry and Dulcie Joslyn – to help her dramatise a familiar struggle with writing and theorising thought. From one perspective, she attempts to find a voice from the position of the fan who is completely enraptured by writing; from another, she is a writer obsessed with the possibility of producing the perfect piece of prose.

In works such as the ongoing *Indirect Language* (2010–), the artist endeavours to access and disassemble Merleau-Ponty’s texts on phenomenology through speech, visual interaction and a questioning of her own characters’ understanding and misinterpretation of theory; Spooner’s performances generally belong to ‘systems’ that focus on a particular piece of historical thought, where acts or chapters are scripted, performed, redrafted, rethought and shuffled perpetually. Importantly, Spooner uses this practical questioning to prioritise what she calls ‘emotional social knowledge’, which is constructed through each performer’s interaction with another and the work’s relationship with its audience to topple ‘correct’ positions.

In *Piece for a Male Speaker and 27 Interruptions* (2010), for example, Spooner attempts to perform the subject of Jacques Rancière’s 1991 book, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Asserting that the schoolmaster need not know anything, Rancière challenges his readers to consider equality as a starting point, rather than a destination for teaching, and argues that educators can channel equal intelligence to facilitate intellectual growth in virtually unlimited directions. Spooner takes this claim to dwell on a deliberate lack of authority and sets her two characters to work in a semi-improvised scene. What ensues is a humorous anti-power struggle, in which neither character takes the lead, or places themselves in a superior position to instruct the other. It’s an intelligent move that produces a radically ambiguous play, testing Rancière’s theory and the philosopher’s current dominant status in our culture.

by
Andrew
Hunt





Angel Otero:

Western culture has been, from Greek statuary to Justin Bieber's Grammy, nothing if not perpetually youth-obsessed. Art, for instance, fancies its talent green and freshly scrubbed (and naively cheap, too, if you please). Such callow connoisseurship is a bit like preferring one's fruit unripe and undersized – especially today, as the twice-annual shopping raids on art schools from Yale to Goldsmiths bring in dwindling returns. 'Youth', said a cutting Cyril Connolly, 'is a period of missed opportunities'. Grizzled George Bernard Shaw, no slouch in the old grouch department, concurred: 'Youth is wasted on the young'.

Yet while 'maturity' evades even a few seasoned artists – the eternally youthful Peter Saul (seventy-six) comes to mind – some notable freshmen emerge every so often to upset the notion that experience is the best teacher and that youth must be easily deceived. New York-based painter Angel Otero is the latest gimlet-eyed exception to the rule that wise souls cannot come in precocious packages, making his mark via an outsider's vigorous moxie and what American politicians – of both sexes and from both sides of the aisle – now openly plump as 'testicular virility'.

Born in Puerto Rico, Otero is the firstborn son of an insurance-agent father and a bank-teller mother. Despite an early facility with drawing, his stolidly middle-class upbringing did not much augur a future set-to with global visual culture. 'My art education was very vague and my parents didn't know anything about art', Otero told *The Huffington Post* of growing up arty in the tropics. 'For me, early on, art was painting landscapes... then a guy showed me images of a Pollock painting [in a book] and it shocked me; it felt very liberating that the world accepted that as art.'

After graduating from university in San Juan, Otero sold insurance by day and painted by night, until he received a scholarship to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. By the shores of Lake Michigan he experienced both snow and a total immersion in art, as well as an embarrassing sense of his own rusticity. Asked in class to name his favourite contemporary artist, Otero blurted out, 'Jackson Pollock!' 'How does it feel to live in the 1950s?' his instructor teased as his fellow students laughed. Six years later, Otero was awarded the coveted Leonore Annenberg Fellowship. No one laughs harder than the bumpkin once he's arrived.

Moving from art-school grad to accomplished young artist – his shows include Kavi Gupta gallery, Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art, a recent attention-grabbing appearance at Art Basel Miami Beach as well as an upcoming solo at New York's Lehmann Maupin Gallery – Otero quickly became a virtuoso of the newfangled mashup

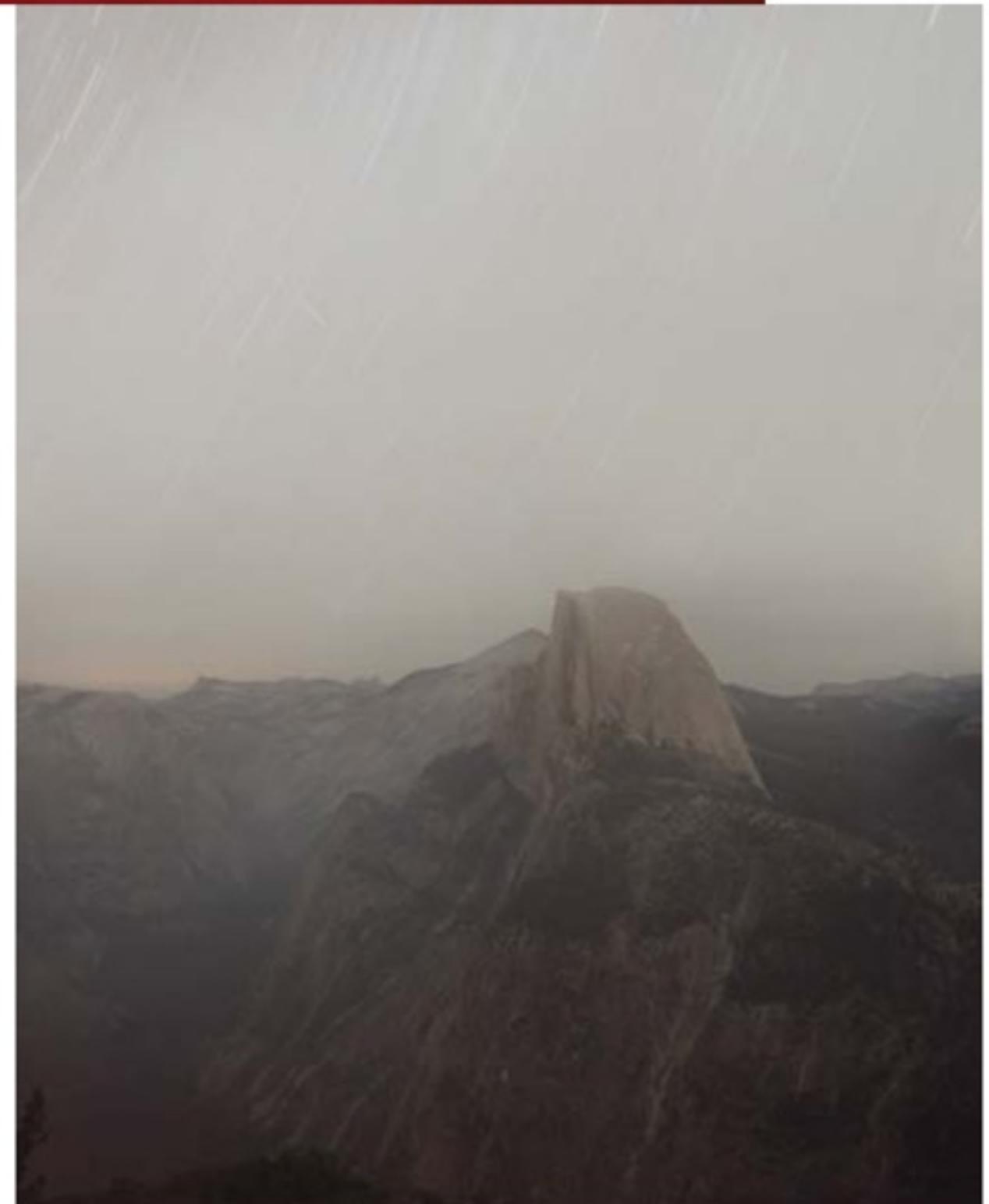
of abstract and figurative painting that constitutes today's new Nouveau Réalisme (think Mark Bradford *sans* the racial essentialism). Starting with figurative canvases that combined assemblage and more conventional applications of oil on canvas, Otero has formulated a body of work that recently cashiered personal motifs (previously drawn from his own island history). The results are both post-postmodernist and cussedly original – a sort of 'back to the future' of painting that literally crumples the medium, then lays it wide open to certain chance events.

The singularity of Otero's work is indivisible from his particular species of process-oriented formal innovation. Painting in reverse, with a nod to the film *Memento* (2000), he applies oil paint onto large sheets of glass. Once these have dried (which can take up to two weeks), Otero peels the oil paint off their surfaces with a set of 'blades', then adheres their buckled compositions onto canvas, amending their broken surfaces with additional painted gestures, shapes and letters. "These procedures", Otero told me, "produce surprises to which I've become addicted". Assembled negatively – like a print or photographic film – Otero's recent text-based invocations of twentieth-century philosophy (which include quotes from Sartre, among other totemic figures) also serve as visual essays in metaphysical instability for our own stunningly unreflective, culturally dumbfounded time.

Otero's most recent pictures are, in fact, as much about collage as they are about *décollage* – the tearing away or removal of pieces of an original image. Using a working method that suggests a lineage to poster rippers Raymond Hains and Mimmo Rotella as well as kinship to younger sculptors such as Brian Dettmer and Ishmael Randall Weeks, Otero's practice has become a significant thresher of influences. Young in years, his painting and sculpture strives to excavate meaning from art and its traditions with the resoluteness of a veteran.



by
Christian
Viveros-Fauné



Trevor Paglen:

Trevor Paglen may have a masters in fine art and a PhD in geography, but the American artist also embodies the ethos of any private citizen-cum-amateur detective, deploying the available means to bring visibility to an increasingly opaque field of American military operations. Retracing paths carved by frontier photographers such as Timothy O'Sullivan (during nineteenth-century topographical and military surveys, for example), Paglen sets the canonical sites of the western United States against skies carved by latter-day reconnaissance vessels: classified American satellites (189 in all) that the artist tracks, with the aid of fellow amateur astronomers and a computer-controlled motorised tripod (see

the series *The Other Night Sky*, 2007). For a separate body of 'limit telephotography', Paglen trains his lens on CIA 'black sites' such as Afghanistan's 'Salt Pit' and Nevada's Tonopah Test Range (alias 'Area 52'). Due to the sites' remote locations and the surrounding expanses of restricted land, Paglen produces what he calls 'landscapes that cannot be seen with the unaided eye', using high-powered telescopes from up to 60 miles away. Several of the resulting images may as well be abstracts, as atmosphere and heat convection conspire to keep the artist's targets hidden, paradoxically giving a more telling account of governmental secrecy through their prohibitive aesthetics. Beyond his photographic work,

Paglen's writings detail the history of state secrecy, tracing a line from the 1949 Central Intelligence Agency Act that provided 'the only statutory basis for the black budget' through to the present-day activities of the now four million people in the US who work on classified projects. In one chapter of his book *Blank Spots on the Map* (2009), Paglen spies on black-world aeroplane shuttles from a Vegas hotel room – one of many amusing and disturbing anecdotes about a covert network often hiding in plain sight and certainly stranger than fiction.

by
Tyler
Coburn

Kate Levant:



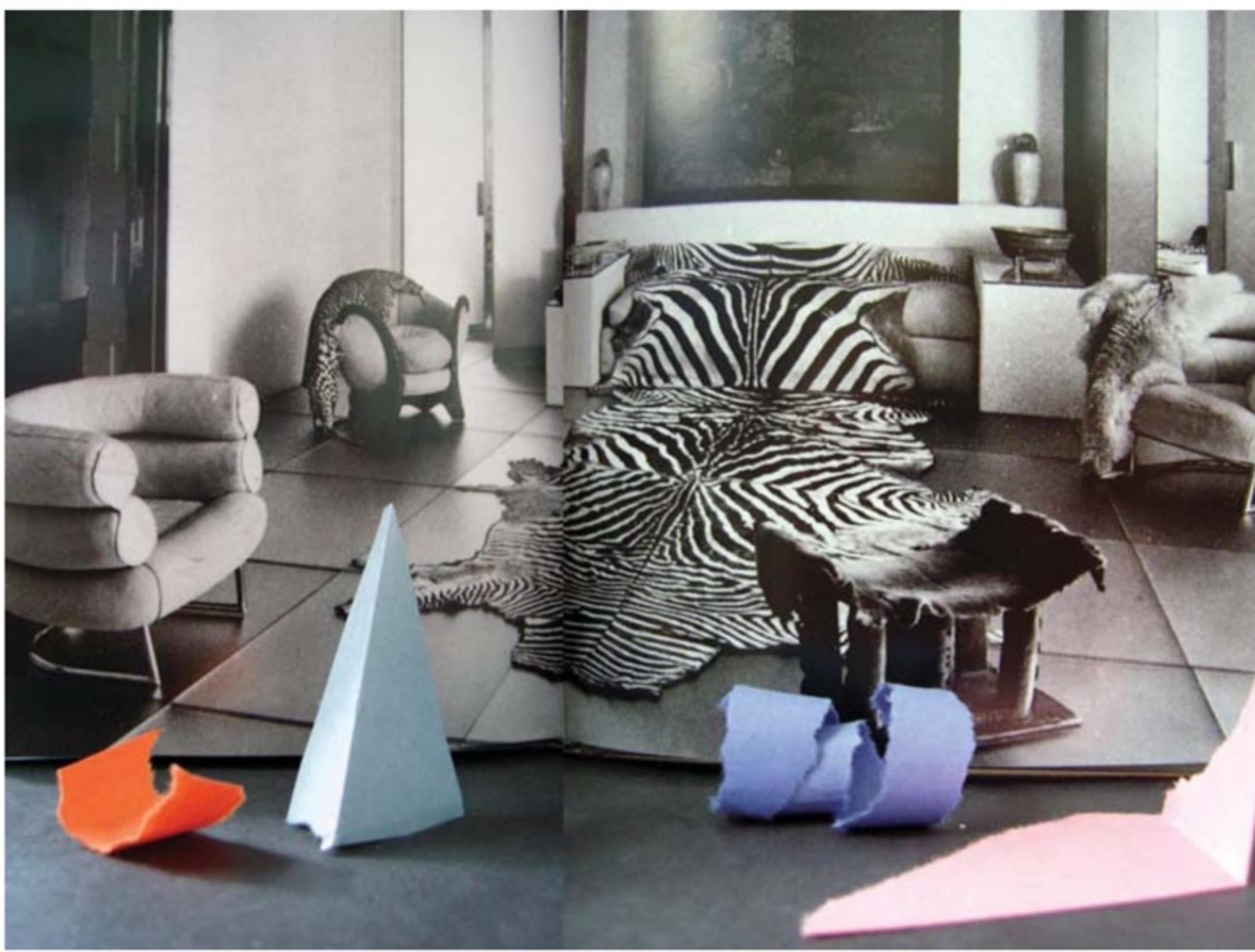
In one of Kate Levant's works, the following injunction can be seen handwritten alongside an image of a penumbral, trash-littered interior: 'Identify your material, disassociate it from the world, manifest the object, ENTER ALPHA AND AND DESTROY IT'. Although evocative of, say, some kind of militaristic episode of science fiction, its blunt lack of ceremony and oblique urgency seems like a good way to describe the fascinating practice of the Detroit-based artist. Having first made a stir back in 2009 while still a student at Yale with her blood-drive project, featured in a group show she curated at Zach Feuer gallery in New York, the recent grad reentered the artworld's purview via a collaboration with Michael E. Smith during Art Basel Miami Beach 2010. Invited to participate in a one-night group exhibition on an artificial island close to Miami, a thing 'monstrous and free', the two artists decided to 'drop a body into the project', and transplanted Pat, a Detroit native who drives

armoured trucks for a living, onto the island for the duration of the exhibition while they themselves continued on into the Everglades to 'concentrate on mangroves'.

Strange, yes. But when you encounter Levant's rather derelict sculptures – as in her two-person exhibition (again with Smith) in 2009 at Susanne Hilberry gallery in Ferndale, Michigan – fashioned out of broken Venetian blinds, car parts and unidentifiable chunks of postindustrial aftermath, it becomes hard to ignore the creeping suspicion that she is a few steps ahead of the rest of us. Not only does the work seem to suggest a manmade world in which human beings have become alien, but it also represents, literally and figuratively, an attempt to negotiate that world, to tenably inhabit it. Which is why I am quite convinced that the genuine urgency of what Levant does is destined to become only more urgent.

by
Chris
Sharp





Maria Loboda:

A 2006 work by Maria Loboda entitled *A Guide to Insults and Misanthropy* (which has had several incarnations) consists of a generous bouquet of flowers displayed in a vase. The unusual arrangement of the blooms (too tall alongside too short, etc) and their clashing colours and shapes mean that the flowers dull and ugly one another, rather than complementing and prettifying, as they would in a florist's confection. The Kraków-born artist chose the flowers on the basis of the meanings ascribed to them in the Victorian symbolism of flora, and all of those selected carry negative connotations (hatred, frigidness or distrust, for example). The work is a small revelatory moment highlighting the physical or plastic elements of language: the ability of words to take material form. A recent work, *Chagrin* (2010), is a small piece of shagreen, the dyed green leather, commonly made from the skin of sharks and stingrays, which was used



to cover books and furniture during the Art Deco period: books and chairs bound in sorrow and distress (shagreen – chagrin). If one can sense words in Loboda's works, one can also detect music. She has, for example, created a 'conversational space', *A Room As a Song* (2009) – a chair, a cushion and a screen based on the Czech cubist style of the 1920s – from the materials that one would use to make a harpsichord: felt, oak, maple, walnut, ayous and steel wire.

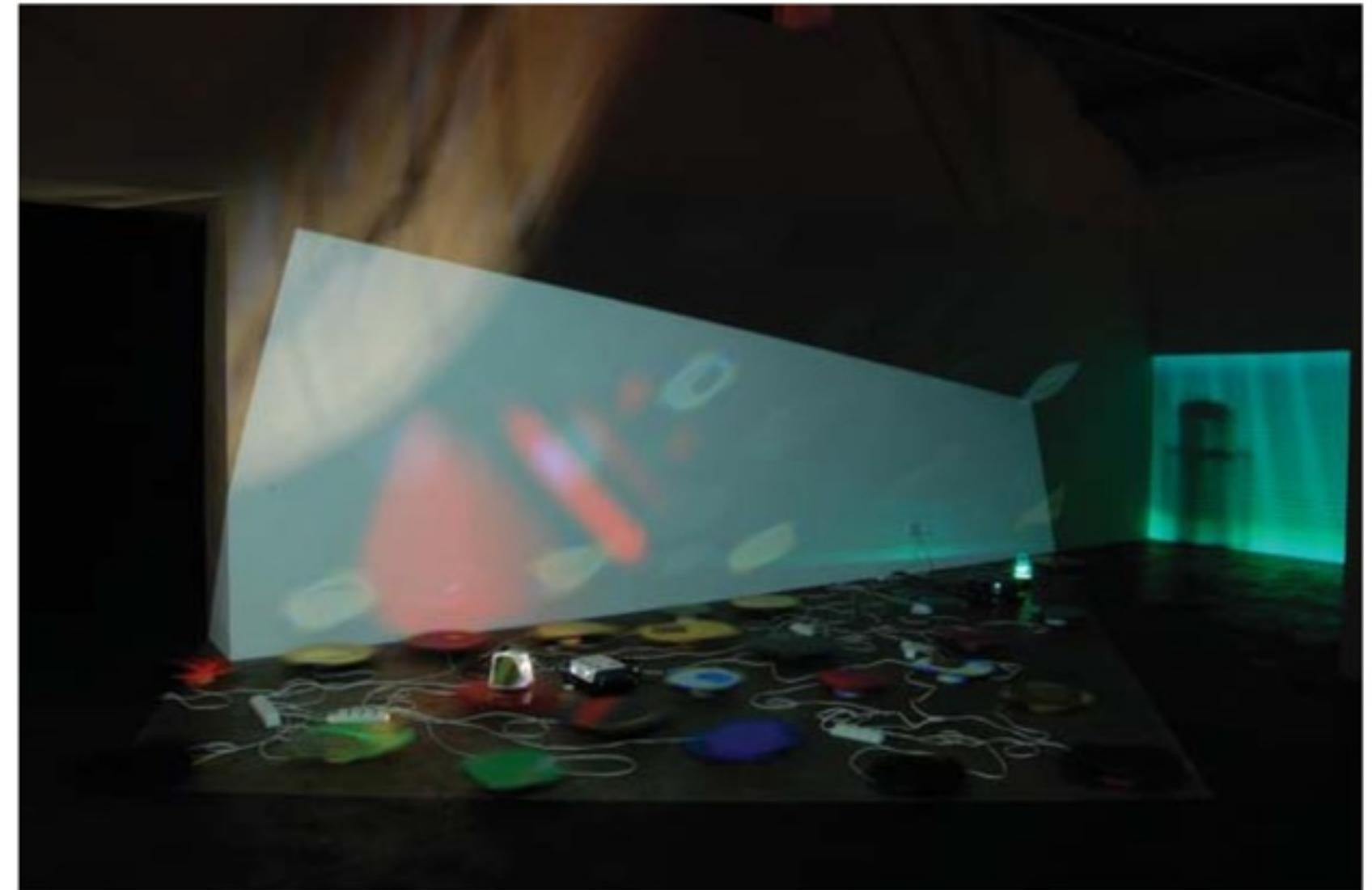
On occasion in Loboda's work one glimpses the presence of two shadowy and rather overbearing members of our artistic pantheon – Joseph Beuys and Marcel Duchamp. If the former invested materials with a personal mysticism, Loboda seemingly invokes a mysticism that is shared, and puts it into conversation with the readymade materialist wordplay favoured by the Frenchman. It's this double concern with material – with teasing out the sometimes occult or hidden history of objects – that allows her to bounce the work into another dimension, one that hovers between the realms of the physical and metaphysical. Her recent exhibition at Krome Gallery in Berlin pulled together materials bound to tear one another apart. A wall pattern based on the types associated with the Wiener Werkstätte was painted in shades of Schweinfurter green, Naples yellow, Prussian blue and vermillion, each containing a toxic element: arsenic, cyanide, mercury or lead. In *Ah, Wilderness* (2010), three branches from three trees – birch, cedar and pine – hang together: these naturally grow in monocultures, and tend to kill the other plants around them. We can hang here for this moment, they appear to say, but that's all.

by
Laura
McLean-Ferris



from left: *New Sculptures for an Old Collection*, 2008, four Eileen Gray catalogues, stained wood, construction paper, 120 x 35 x 35 cm, courtesy the artist and Galerie Schleicher + Lange, Paris; *Walldrawing (Cyanide, Arsenic, Mercury, Lead)*, 2010, site-specific, dimensions variable, courtesy the artist, Krome Gallery, Berlin, and Galerie Schleicher + Lange, Paris; *Overelaboration of Patterns*, 2010, exhibition version, 200 x 40 x 10 cm, pillows 80 x 90 cm, courtesy the artist, Krome Gallery, Berlin, and Galerie Schleicher + Lange, Paris

Laura Buckley:



Laura Buckley's video/audio/sculptural installations synthesise the natural with the contrived, precision with lysergic sprawl, geometry with gauzy emotiveness. What this actually looks like, most often, is a darkened space in which saturated DVD projections and coloured lights bounce sociably off mobile reflective surfaces – floor-based consortia of Perspex polyhedrons on spinning turntables, for example. This interplay sends the Galway-born, London-based artist's anecdotal videos pinwheeling around gallery walls, as if we were at once in a club and in the foreign expanses of a stranger's memory.

Mostly shot offhandedly on her mobile phone, Buckley's video material is a cipher of realness designed to play against her artifices. In *KZN Suspended Hexagon* (2010), fragmentary views of a spinning coat rack, bright flora, a derelict grain silo and a crazy golf course veer and smear psychedelically as they're projected through a suspended, slowly rotating, neo-hexagonal sculpture made of two-way mirrored Perspex (itself spectrally

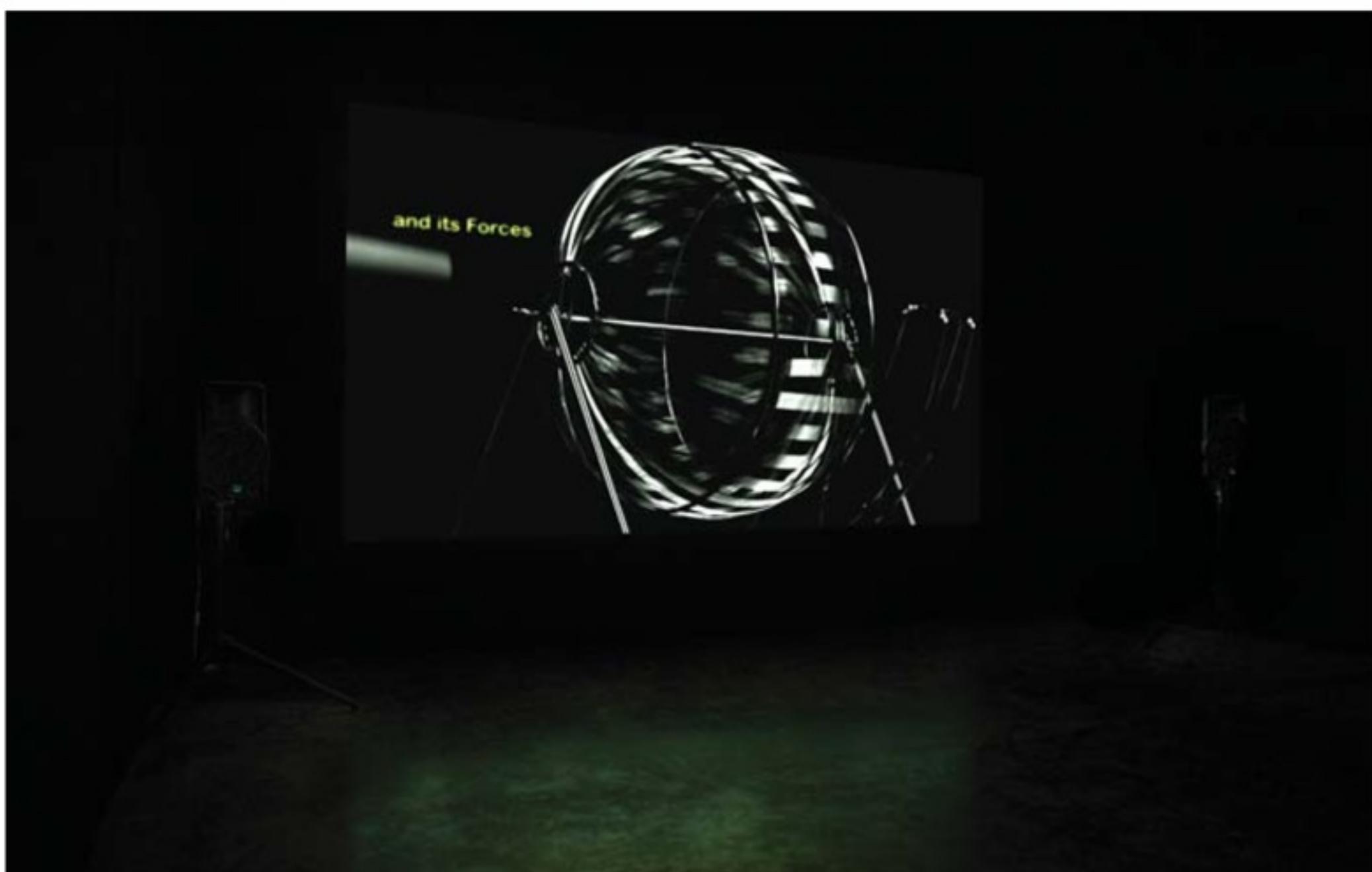
shadowed on the wall by the projector's light). But video is, in her art, a motive for what Buckley calls "a moving audio-visual orchestration of sound, light and colour". "I'm trying at times to produce a trance-like state that slips in and out", she says. In that slippage, one falls under her art's ambulatory sway, then recognises its reflexive undertow. (In *Vitrine for Inez*, 2006, made while Buckley was a Chelsea postgraduate, footage of an earlier sculpture being welded nods explicitly to Robert Morris's 1961 *Box with the Sound of its Own Making*.)

"I call what I'm doing now 'light painting'", says Buckley, who originally trained as a painter. One might see her art as approximating an abstracted, dreamy, painterly space at one remove – and then drawing attention to how it's done. Her palette has lately expanded to include music: Buckley's recent piece at London's Cell Project Space, *Extramundane* (2010) – a conurbation of rotating sculptures reflecting complexly intersecting projections and changeable coloured light – was sound-tracked by a hesitant piano étude. Here was a miniature gesamtkunstwerk: if art is going to blend specific form and incipient collapse and enact ceasefires between self-reflexivity and hazy affect, one found oneself thinking, it might as well employ sound, too – sound that, characteristically, one experiences as both lightly melancholy and knowingly directive. It's a balancing act, but Buckley never slips.



by
Martin
Herbert

Elizabeth Price:



For some artists there's a moment when they go from just being good to being properly great. Elizabeth Price is one of those; an artist whose work has, over the last four years, completely remade itself, evolving from earlier, conceptualist-inspired work that focused on the nature of art institutions and their histories – of archiving, narrative and forgetting – into a weirder, darker and altogether more intoxicated world of video-driven, bullet-pointed critical delirium. Price's recent videos, from *The House of Mr X* (2007) to *Welcome (The Atrium)* (2008) and the phenomenal *UserGroupDisco* (2010, a highlight of the current British Art Show), suck us into spaces entirely populated by objects – artworks, designer furniture, mass consumer goods – narrated by the silent voice of blinking over-titles that invite us to attend to the administrative, bureaucratic and institutional powers that lie behind the glossy, glinting things we witness. *The House of Mr X* glides through the empty house of cosmetics entrepreneur (and gallery benefactor) Stanley Picker (who died in 1982, leaving his house and art collection in the care of a trust), full of high-

taste objets d'art and mid-century modernism, while *UserGroupDisco* conjures the shadowy recesses of a notional 'Hall of Sculptures'. One moment didactic, then cryptic, then exclamatory, the streaming over-titles of Price's videos veer from critical meditation on the politics of art, the history of modernity and the corrupt logic of taxonomy, into passages of apocalyptic, hallucinated exuberance, in which Price's fetishised, spinning objects – cappuccino frothers, electric wine coolers, executive toys, 1970s ceramics – accelerate into a frenzy of anachronistic consumer desire, whirling to the rousing, karaoke-version power-chords of A-ha's *Take on Me* (1984). It's in that juncture, when you find yourself slipping from the rational, didactic, discursive moment of critical self-consciousness into the seductive, seduced world of promises for a utopian moment of aesthetic fulfilment, that Price's work reveals the subtlety and force of its project: that we are never on the virtuously critical 'outside' of an otherwise corrupt, uncritical (art)world, but constantly implicated, working to discern the contours of the powers that shape the present, while always doing so in the midst of the pleasures they seek to control.

by
J.J.
Charlesworth



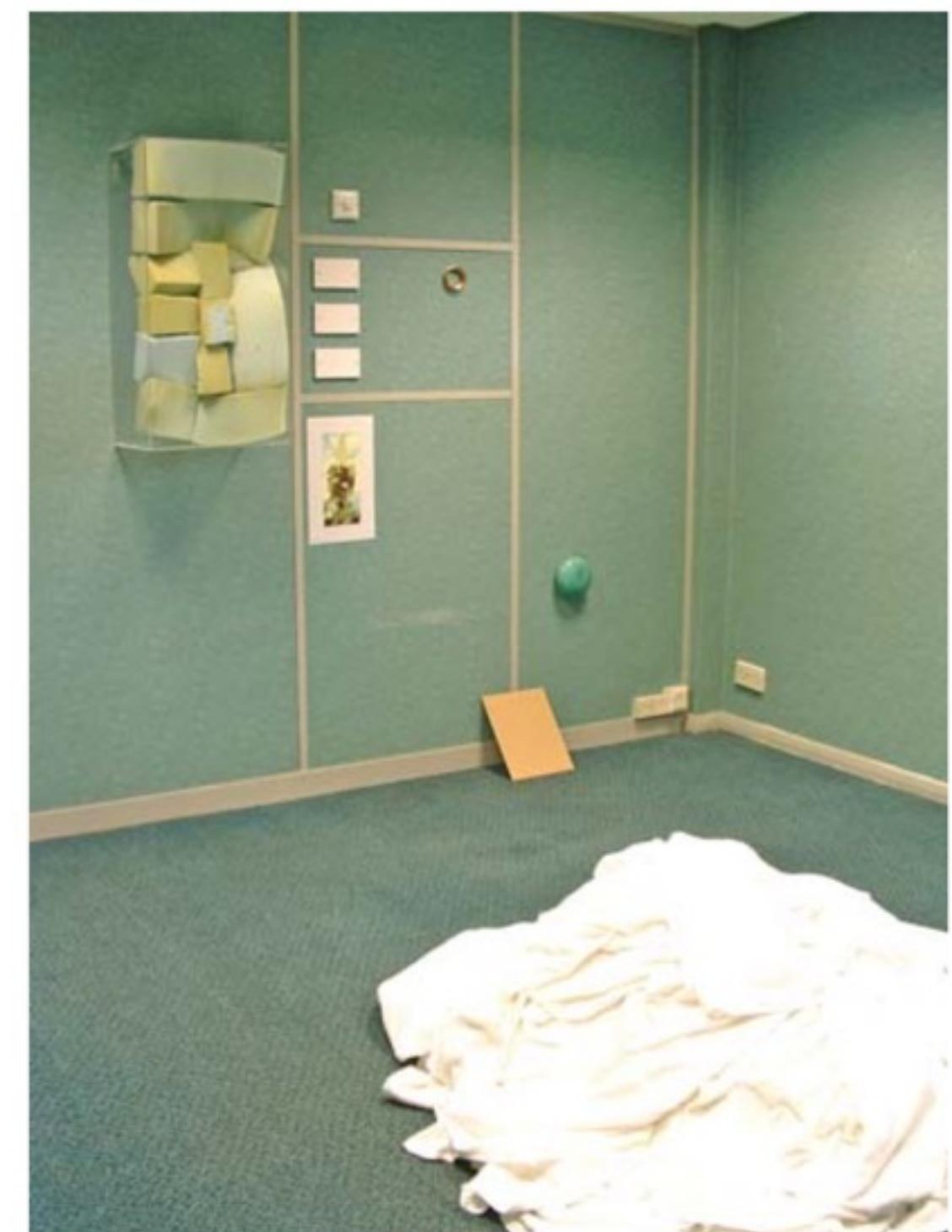


Maria Georgoula's sculpture and research-based practice centres on aggregating the maelstrom of data that bombards the senses at any given moment. Simultaneously highlighting and manipulating, Georgoula formalises this melee into a series of signs that can be acted on or ignored by the viewer: for though there are narratives to be found within her practice, the artist is not asking us to play conceptual detective, but rather to enjoy these newfound amalgamations on their own terms as a totality, an endpoint. For example, those of a curious mind can research the eponymous clergyman of *Reverend D'Ewes Coke* (produced for a small project in Derbyshire that I curated in 2010) and find reference to a British Victorian philanthropist; yet the artist has portrayed Coke not through discernable biography, but through incorporating details from her own circumstances during the period of research into the individual. In the resultant installation, a central formal element is an abstract ceramic, its presence reflecting the fact that Georgoula learned casting during the development of the work. The aggregation is thus not only data-based but uses material as a form of information too, making no distinction between the subject of Coke and the ceramic – or indeed the curled piping, spoons and meringue that form part of the final assemblage.

Maria Georgoula:

Contextualised within the materials are the comic double meanings of both form and subject. The meringue, for example, used again in *At Niohori with Lindita* (2010), or the syrupy phallic candy in *Andreas X* (2009), can be understood, humorously, both as a subject and as a means of representation. Running parallel to the artist's sculpture practice, the *Nauru Project* (2007–) is a collaborative, ongoing research-based work coordinated by Georgoula, primarily based around a blog in which invited contributors pool found imagery, statistics and news – together with new writing and work – concerning Nauru, in the South Pacific, the world's smallest island-state. The artist's aim is not that the blog become a reliable source of information on its subject, but that it be a platform for treating data as she does physical materials. Georgoula's primary concern is the mapping of how knowledge develops, regardless of whether the end product is sculptural or digital.

by
Oliver
Basciano





Jan Tichy:

'Video installation': a two-word combination that leaves me cold, even a little nauseous, whenever I read it in a press release or hear it uttered by an artist describing the contents of an upcoming show. It's rare that they're any good, these things, or even anything better than dreadful. Not so with Jan Tichy's installations, which I first encountered at the Helena Rubinstein Pavilion for Contemporary Art in Tel Aviv, and then again at Art TLV, the first Tel Aviv biennial, both in September 2009.

At the pavilion (where Tichy was showing in a generous exhibition of a number of Israeli all-stars: Yael Bartana, Nahum Tevet, Guy Ben Ner) his *Installation No. 3* (2007) was located in a darkened downstairs area and looked at first like nothing more than a dramatically illuminated paper model of a simple architectural skeleton. Then I noticed that the illumination was coming from a video projector, and that the model's purpose was to provide a shadow structure on the wall on which the video's subtle silhouette animations could be seen to climb, walk, fall, etc. It was,

quite simply, the most imaginative combination of projected shadow-play, sculpture and physical space I have encountered. *Installation No. 6 (Tubes)* (2009), the piece from the biennial, condensed this assemblage to a series of white paper tubes standing on top of a flat-screen monitor. The animation here was abstract, à la Hans Richter. The effect was equally potent.

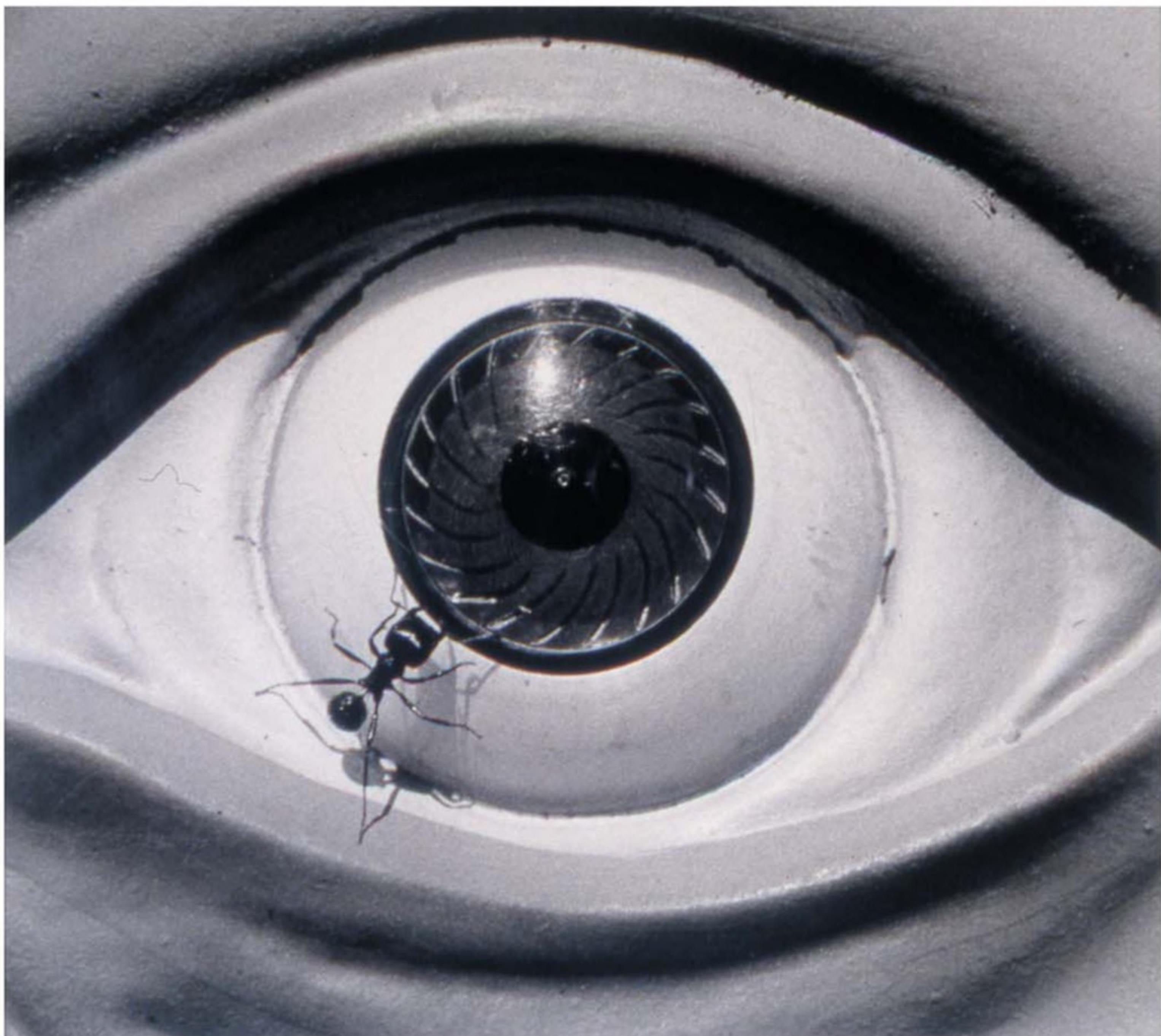
Tichy's work is not without its politics too, as a number of his assemblages have invoked architectures and topographies that are intelligible only in terms of conflict, with a sensitivity that the artist's Czech heritage and Israeli education have no doubt honed. This month, Tichy brings that sensitivity to the illumination of the last building of Chicago's long-ago-failed Cabrini-Green housing project – a model, like the notorious Pruitt-Igoe in St Louis (whose destruction, according to architecture critic Charles Jencks, marked the day that Modernism died), of twentieth-century urban policy gone awry. As the building is demolished over the course of many days, the LED lights Tichy has arranged to rhythmically flash in all of its windows will go with it, an allegory of ideology and enlightenment if ever there was one.

by
Jonathan
T.D. Neil



from top: *Installation No. 6 (Tubes)*, 2009, digital video with sound on freestanding 27-inch analogue television monitor with 250g white paper objects, 10 min, 120 x 70 x 60 cm. Courtesy Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago

Image: David Wojnarowicz, "Untitled from the Ants Series" (eye, ants), 1988-89. Courtesy of P-P-O-W, New York.



Moving image

An Art Fair of Contemporary Video Art

March 3 - 6, 2011 | New York, NY

www.moving-image.info



Pham Luan, *Street Vendors* oil on canvas, 135x155cm, 2009

Artists

Les Quy Tong	Bui Huu Hung
Pham Luan	Le Thanh Son
Phuong Quoc Tri	Dao Hai Phong
Hong Viet Dung	Do Hoang Tuong
Do Quang Em	Dinh Y Nhi
Dang Xuan Hoa	Le Thiet Cuong
Tran Luu Hau	Lim Khim Katy
Hoang Duc Dung	Bui Van Hoan
Nguyen Van Cuong	

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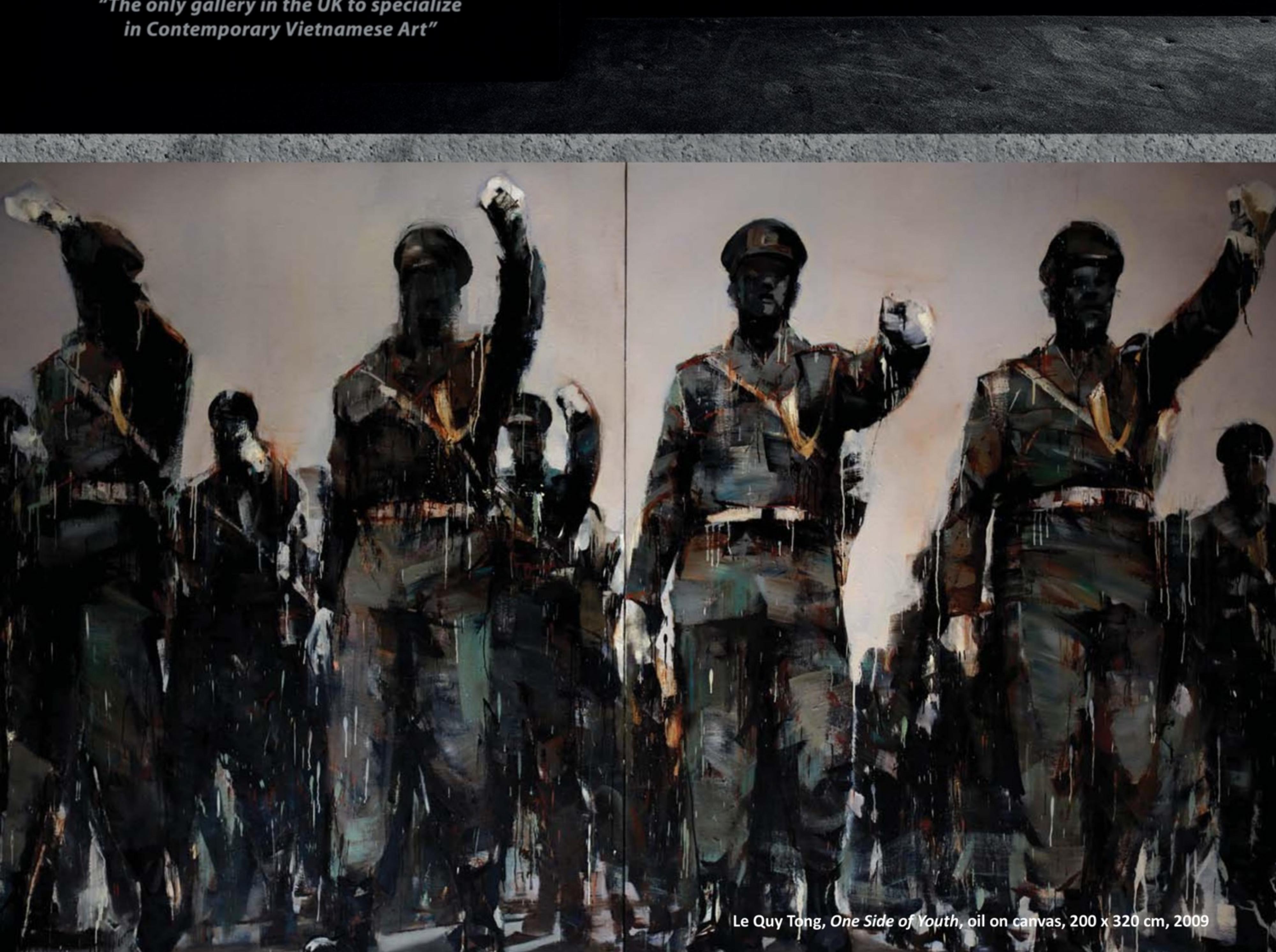
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Mayfair, London W1S 4HZ

Tel: +44 (0)2074 918 987

Email: info@apricotgallery.uk.com

www.apricotgallery.uk.com



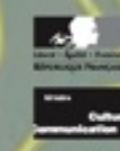
Le Quy Tong, *One Side of Youth*, oil on canvas, 200 x 320 cm, 2009

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25 MARS AU 7 MAI 2011

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www.beauxartsparis.fr



NICE TO BE DEAD

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Daniel Kelly
Ben Washington

Private View
6 - 9pm, 01.03.11
02.03.11 - 19.03.11
12 - 6pm*



Unit 5 Victoria House
37 - 63 Southampton Row
London WC1B 4DA
*closed Mondays



What the folk say

Folk art interventions at Compton Verney
26 March - 11 December 2011

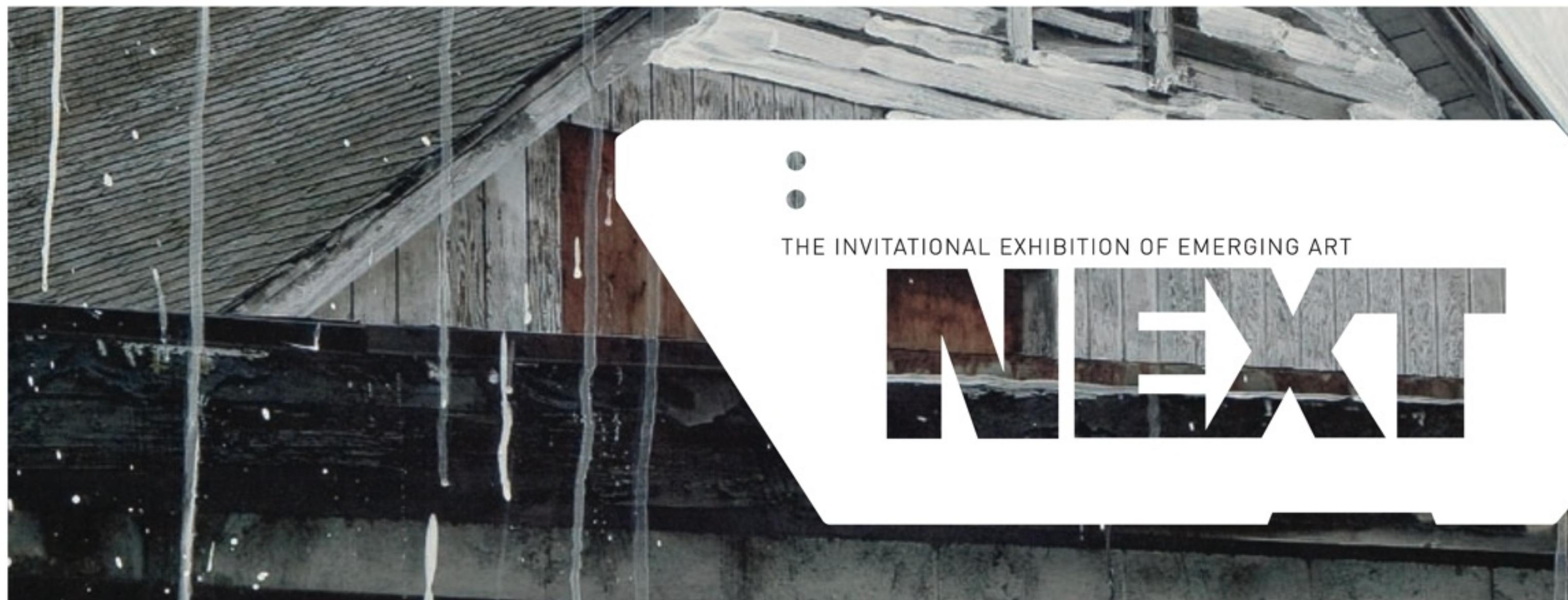
by
Tasha Amini
James Ayres
Daniel Baker
Sir Peter Blake
Sonia Boyce
Faye Claridge

Simon Costin
Jeremy Deller
Carolyn Flood
Jenny Gordon
Antonia Harrison
Susan Hiller
Juneau Projects

Alan Kane
Paula MacArthur
Martin Myrone
Mike Nelson
Paul Ryan
Sarah Woodfine

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T. 01926 645 500
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Dan Giordan, *We All Want What We Can't Have, Even If It's Crap*, 2010. Detail. Courtesy of Robert Bills Contemporary.

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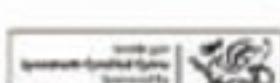
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MODERN & CONTEMPORARY TURKISH ART

AUCTION 266

20 MARCH 2011

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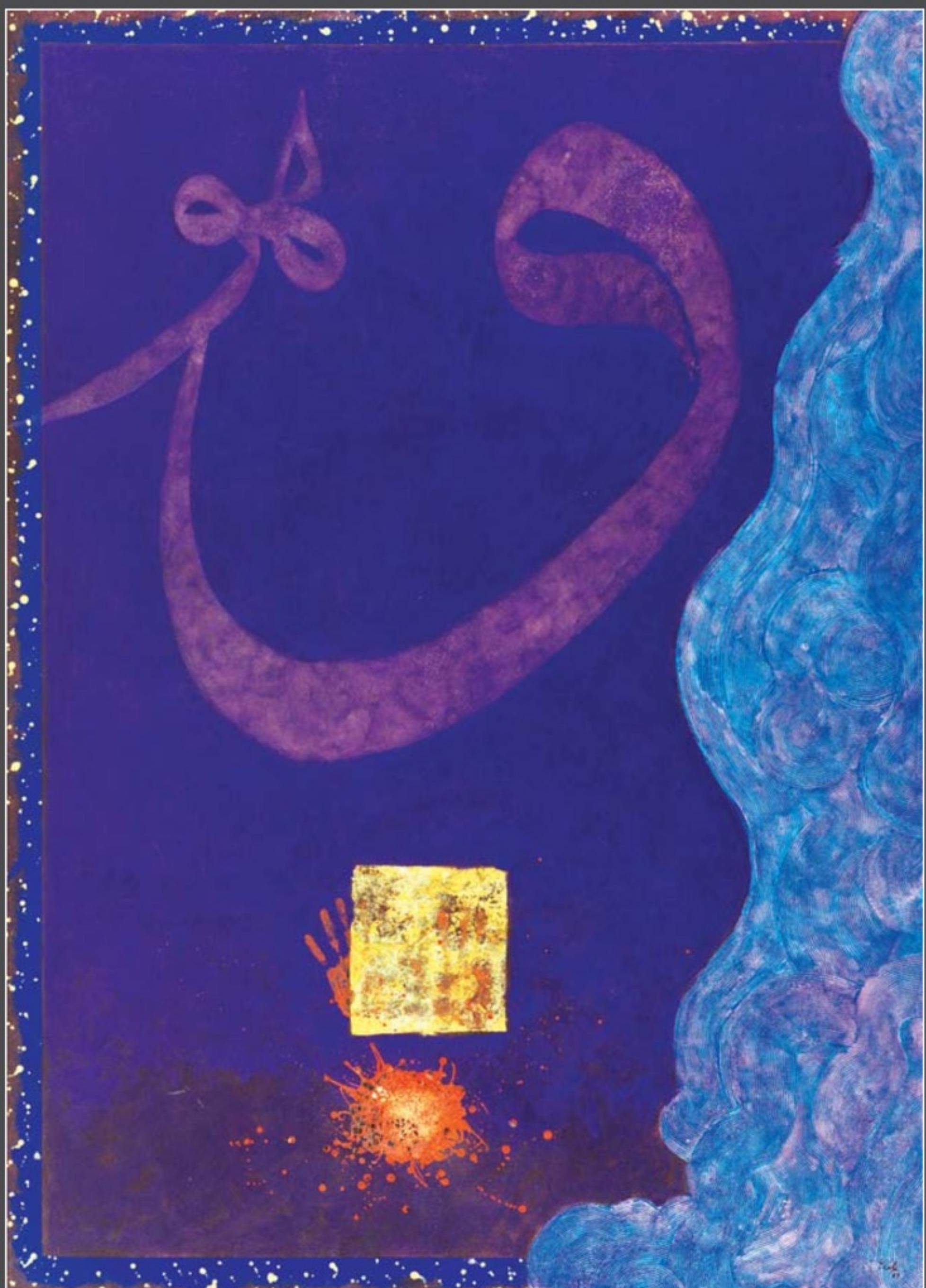


“Think Globally, Collect Globally”

Erol Akyavaş (1932-1999)
“VAV”

Oil on canvas, 210x150 cm
(20 March 2011 sale 266)

Estimate: € 300.000 - € 400.000



World Auction Records at ANTİK A.Ş.



Fahr el Nissa Zeid
(1901-1991)
“London”
2.350.000 TL € 605.000
November 2009 sale 258



Burhan Doğançay (1929)
“Symphony in Blue”
2.770.000 TL € 1.260.000
(November 2009 sale 258)
(World auction record for the artist)
(World auction record for a living
Turkish artist)



Erol Akyavaş (1932-1999)
“The Siege”
2.650.000 TL € 1.274.000
(March 2010 sale 260)
(World auction record for the artist)
(World auction record for
Contemporary Turkish Art)



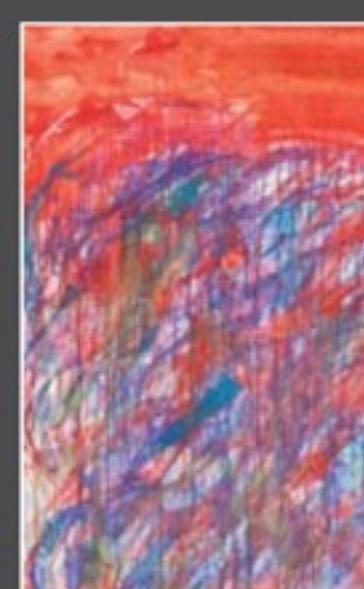
Fahr el Nissa Zeid
(1901-1991)
“Abstract Composition”
1.073.000 TL € 550.000
November 2010 sale 263



Mehmet Gülcü (1938)
“The Fall”
757.000 TL € 388.000
November 2010 sale 263
(World auction record for the artist)



Burhan Doğançay (1929)
“Dancing Ribbons”
883.000 TL € 453.000
November 2010 sale 263



Mübin Orhon
(1924-1981)
“Abstract”
1.357.000 TL
€ 696.000
November 2010
(World auction
record for the artist)

Artam
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www.alexiaogoethegallery.com
Jacques Villegle
to 25 Mar

BALTIC CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

Gateshead Quays,
South Shore Road,
Gateshead
George Shaw
The Sly and Unseen Day
to 15 May

BLAIN SOUTHERN

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London W1S 1AL
T +44 (0)207 493 4492
www.blainsouthern.com
Bill Viola
The Quintet Of The Unseen
to 12 Mar

CAMDEN ARTS CENTRE

Arkwright Road
London NW3 6DG
T +44 (0)20 7472 5500
*A Multitude of soap bubbles which
explode from time to time...*
Pino Pascali
4 Mar - 1 May

DELFINA FOUNDATION

29 Catherine Place
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T +44 (0)207 233 5344
info@delfinafoundation.com
delfinafoundation.com
Ala Dehghan & Wael Shawky
In residence with events.

ELEVEN

11 Eccleston Street
London, SW1W 9LX
T +44 (0)20 7823 5540
Harry Cory Wright
Place in Mind
to 26 Mar

HAUNCH OF VENISON

6 Burlington Gardens
London W1S 3ET
T +44(0)20 7495 5050
www.haunchofvenison.com
Meekyoung Shin
to 2 Apr

LISSON GALLERY

52-54 Bell Street
London, NW1 5DA
T +44(0)20 7724 2739
contact@lissongallery.com
Haroon Mirza
to 19 Mar
Surface/Tension
(*Dan Shaw-Town, Kitty Kraus*
and Gedy Sibony)

ON DRY LAND (GROUP SHOW)

Unit 5, Victoria House,
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London WC1B 4DA
12 - 6pm (closed Mondays)
ondryland2011@gmail.com
T +44 (0)7815 284 591
Dmitri Galitzine, Daniel Kelly
& Ben Washington
2-20 March

ROSE ISSA PROJECTS

Leighton House Museum
12 Holland Park Road
London W14
T +44 (0)20 7602 7700
Shadows of Myself
Selma Gurbuz
to 9 Apr

UNITED KINGDOM

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www.chapter.org
Pile: Group show
curated by Craig Fisher
to 20 Mar

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Contemporary artist interventions
26 Mar - Dec 2011

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to 27 Mar

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Craig Murray-Orr
to 26 Mar

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Scotland
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info@marymarygallery.co.uk
Maximilian Zentz Zlomovitz
to 2 Apr

MOTHER'S TANKSTATION

41-43 Watling Street
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gallery@motherstankstation.com
www.motherstankstation.com
David Sherry:
Holding Phones, Counting Cars,
Flights of Geometry
to 26 Mar

NEW ART CENTRE

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Salisbury, Wiltshire SP5 1BG
T +44 (0)1980 862244
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Peter Frie
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www.permanentgallery.com
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A Cabin is Burning
Kitty Clark
to 6 Mar

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newyork@doosangallery.com
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Seung Ae Lee: The Monstrum
to 19 Mar

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New York, NY 10011
548 West 22nd Street,
New York, NY 10011
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info@elizabethdeegallery.com
www.elizabethdeegallery.com
Miriam Cahn to 2 Apr

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540 West 26 St
New York, NY 10001
Open Tues- Sat 10-6
T +1(212)255 2923
info@lehmannmaupin.com
www.lehmannmaupin.com
Angel Otero : Momento
to 10 April

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201 Chrystie St
New York, NY 10002
Open Tues- Sat 11-6, Sun 12-6
T +1(212)254 0054
info@lehmannmaupin.com
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The Parallax View
to Mar 19

L.A. LOUVER

45 North Venice Boulevard,
Venice, California 90291
T +1 (310) 822 4955
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Joel Shapiro
10 Mar - 16 Apr

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New York, NY 10075
T +1 (212) 988-1623
www.michaelwerner.com
info@michaelwerner.com
Hurvin Anderson: Subtitles
to 12 Mar
Robert Mangold: Ring Paintings
18 Mar - 16 Apr

THE PACE GALLERY

32 East 57th Street
T +1 (212) 421 3292
Tues-Frid 9:30- 6 Sat 10-6
www. thepacegallery.com
Paintings, Jim Dine
to 12 Mar

THE PACE GALLERY

534 West 25th Street
T+1 (212) 929-7000
Tues - Sat 10 - 6
*Donald Judd: Works in Granite,
Cor-ten, Plywood, and Enamel on
Aluminum*
to 26 Mar

THE PACE GALLERY

545 West 22nd Street
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Jennifer Bartlett: Recitative
12 Jan - 5 Feb
Please contact the gallery for
further information.

THE PACE GALLERY

510 West 25th Street
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www.thepacegallery.com
Tara Donovan: Drawings (Pins)
to 19 Mar
James Siena
25 Mar - 23 Apr

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1010 Vienna
T +43 1 521 5330
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office@galeriegritainsam.at
Manuel Knapp to 30 Apr
*Ruth Schnell - Mirrors of the
Unseen* to 12 Mar

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Breite Gasse 17
A-1070 Wien
T +43 (0)1524 09 76
www.galeriewinter.at
*Birgit Juergenssen: Gemalte
Fotografie* to 5 Mar
*Proposals, Encryptions and
the Death of a Typology
(Architecturally Speaking)*
by Mary Ellen Carroll
10 Mar - 7 May

SAMMLUNG VERBUND

Arn Hof 6a 1010-Vienna
T +43 (0)5 03 13 50044
sammlung@verbund.com
www.verbund.com/sammlung
Current exhibition: Loan Nguyen

SECESSION

Friedrichstraße 12,
A-1010 Vienna
T +43 1 587 53 07
www.secession.at
office@secession.at
Ines Lombardi
to May 15

GALERIE THADDAEUS ROPAC

Mirabellplatz 2,
5020 Salzburg
T +43 662 881 393
www.ropac.net
*Harun Farocki/Lori Hersberger/
Marc Branderburg/Idee und
Object (group show)*
to 26 Mar

BELGIUM**ARGOS**

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1000 Brussels
T+32 2 229 00 03
www.argosarts.be
Hans Op de Beeck
to 2 Apr

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T +32 2 537 87 03
www.charlesdejonghe.com
Arnaud Gerniers
to 26 Feb

GALERIE ALMINE RECH

20 Rue de l'Abbaye
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T +32 26 485 684
www.alminerech.com
Hedi Slimane/Katja Strunz
to Mar 26

**GALERIE BARONIAN-
FRANCEY**

2 rue Isidore Verheyden
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www.baronianfrancey.com
Antoine Aguilar
to 5 Mar

**GALERIE RODOLPHE
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1050 Brussels
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www.galerierodolphejanssen.com
*Sam Samore/Torbjorn Rodland/
Ryan McGinley*
to 18 Mar

S.M.A.K

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T+32(0)9 240 76 01
www.smak.be
Adrian Ghenie
to 27 Mar

TIM VAN LAERE GALLERY

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www.timvanlaeregallery.com
Adrian Ghenie
27 Jan - 12 Mar
Paula Mueller
17 Mar - 7 May

XAVIER HUFKENS

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www.xavierhufkens.com
Sterling Ruby to 2 Apr

ZENO X GALLERY

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to 12 Mar
Jack Whitten
18 Mar - 7 May

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Bjerggaard@bjerggaard.com
*Sigurdur Gudmundsson -
Situations and Other Photo Works
1970-1982* to 5 Mar
*Ivan Andersen - Tabte horisonter
og forgotton masterpieces*
to 15 Apr
Erwin Wurm - 11 Mar - 26 Jun

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www.nicolaiwallner.com
*"Odd Size" - Elmgreen & Dragset,
David Shrigley, Jonathan Monk,
Peter Land and Jens Haaning*
to 19 Mar

*David Shrigley - new works - solo
exhibition* 8 Apr - 21 May
*Jakob Kolding - new works - solo
exhibition* 8 Apr - 21 May

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www.beauxartsparis.fr
Henri Barande
25 Mar - 7 May

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Sep 2011

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www.fondation.cartier.com
Moebius to 13 Mar

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*California Dreamin (curated by
Hedi Slimane)*
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to 11 Jun

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to 19 Mar
Robert Longo
21 Mar to 23 Apr

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Potsdamer Straße
10785 Berlin
T +49 30 20 61 38 7 0
www.arndtberlin.com
info@arndtberlin.com
Anton Henning – Stilfragen / Questions of Style
to April 20

DEUTSCHE GUGGENHEIM
Unter den Linden 13/15
10117 Berlin
T +49 (0)30 20 2093
www.deutsche-guggenheim.de
Agathe Snow: All Access World
to 30 Mar

JOHANN KÖNIG GALLERY
Dessauer Straße 6-7,
10963 Berlin
www.johannkoenig.de

KW INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART
Auguststraße 69
10117 Berlin
0049.30.243459.0
www.kw-berlin.de
info@kw-berlin.de
KW69 #4
by Kerstin Cmelka
3 Mar - 4 Apr

POOL GALLERY
Tucholskystraße 38
10117 Berlin
Germany
+49 30 24 34 24 62
www.pool-gallery.com
info@pool-gallery.com
Nicky Broekhuysen
Between States, Into Light
12 Mar - 23 Apr

SPRÜTH MAGERS BERLIN
Oranienburger Straße 18
D-10178 Berlin
www.spruethmagers.com
The Art of Narration Changes with Time (Group Show)
to Apr 02
Andrea Zittel
to Apr 02

VW (VENEKLASEN/WERNER)
Rudi-Dutschke-Str. 26,
10969 Berlin
T+49 30 81 61 60418
info@vwberlin.com
www.vwberlin.com
Open Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 11-6
Enrico David to 4 Mar
Neil Campbell, Paul Sharits, Ryan Sullivan, Jeffrey Wells to 22 Apr
Meredyth Sparks, Exhibition
Opening 29 April

GREECE

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T +30 2103 234678 or
+30 2103 316027
www.frisrirasmuseum.com

HOLLAND

MUSEUM BOIJMANS VAN BEUNINGEN
museumpark 18-20
3015 CX Rotterdam
The Netherlands
Gabriel Lester: Suspension of Disbelief to 8 May
Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg (music) Snakes knows it's Yoga
5 Mar - 1 May

GRIMM GALLERY
Keizersgracht 82
1015 CT Amsterdam
The Netherlands
T +31 (0)20 422 7227
info@grimmgallery.com

WITTE DE WITH, CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART
Witte de Withstraat 50
3012 BR Rotterdam
The Netherlands
T +31 (0)10 4110144
www.wdw.nl
info@wdw.nl
Making is Thinking (group exhibition)
to 1 May

IRELAND

IMMA (IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART)
Royal Hospital, Military Road
Kilmainham, Dublin 8
www.imma.ie
info@imma.ie
T +353-1-612-9922

ITALY

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Fendry Ekel, Folkert de Jong
9 Mar - 30 Apr

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Mario Ybarra
Feb/Mar

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www.collezionemaramotti.org

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T +39 0577 94 31 34
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Moataz Nasr/Giovanni Ozzola/Luca Pancrazi
to May 1

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to Aug 15
Please see website for details other shows

MiART
Milan Apr 8-11 2011
www.miart.it

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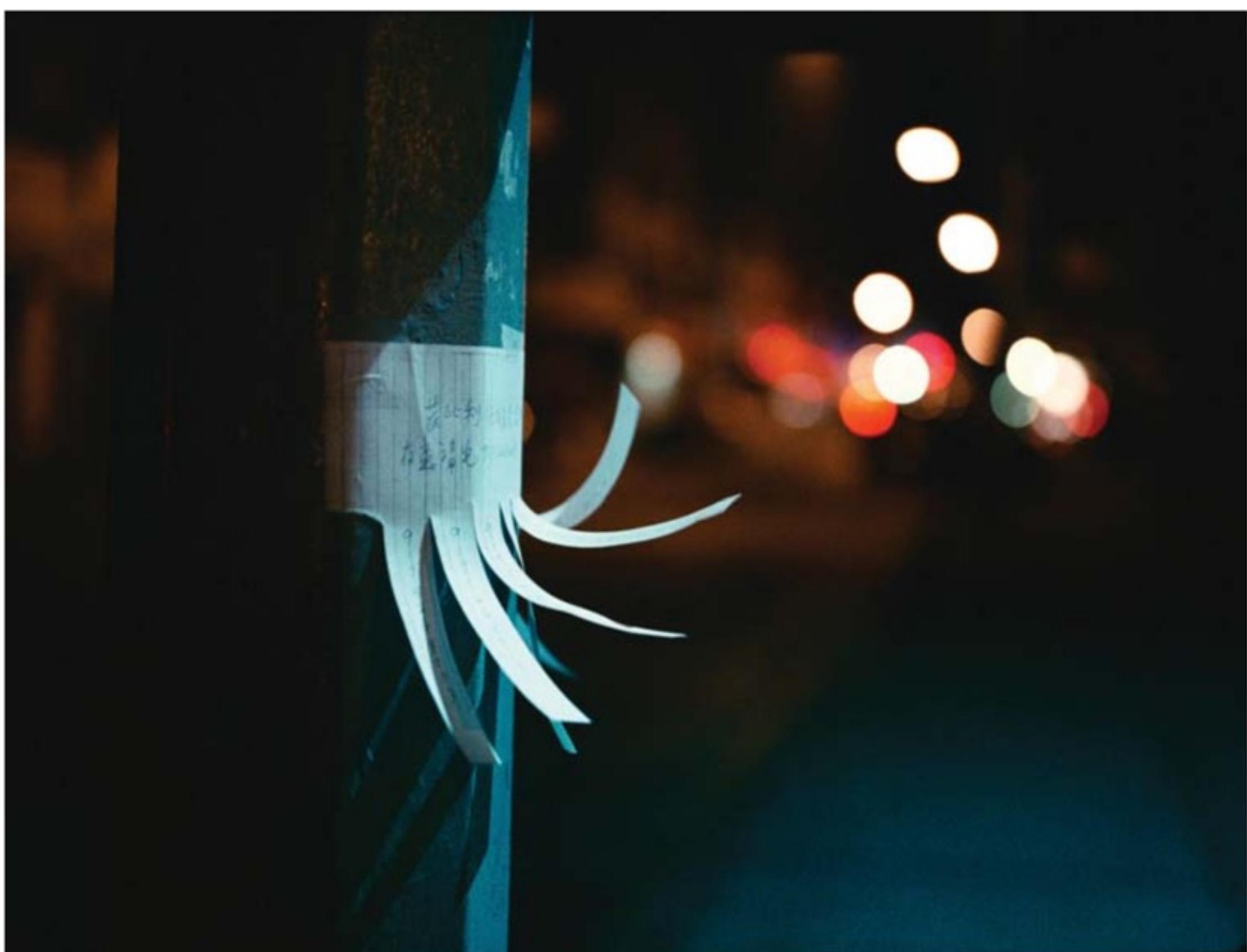
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Philippe Parreno

Serpentine Gallery, London
25 November – 13 February

film sequence of a lightweight, polythene-clad barn structure in a semitropical environs, lights glowing within, a pulley counterweight mechanism and an ox engaged in hauling what might be a connected cable. We're told that the film was made using electricity generated by the ox's work, which also lights the building. Not a film about *something*, then, as much as about the conditions of its own making, about an idea of real work harnessed to the making of cinema work; the awkward and counterintuitive statement that the one condition for filmmaking is that your batteries not run out.

So the gallery-goer is drawn into a self-conscious relationship with his own spectatorship. *June 8, 1968* (2009) ostensibly restages the passage of the assassinated Robert Kennedy's corpse on a funeral train from New York to Washington, DC. Except that none of the impeccably 1960s-styled actors lining the train's route make the kinds of mourning gestures we would expect. We are left with the uneasy sense that these dramatised stand-ins for a 'real' event are in fact real actors simply staring back – at us. Historical time and documentary time no longer function synchronously, while reality and cinematic distance collapse.

The cycle concludes with *Invisibleboy* (2010), a short, darkly brooding sequence centred on a little Chinese boy, his cluttered urban environs and scenes of rag-trade workshops. Animated cartoon creatures appear at various moments, using the old technique of scratching into the film emulsion itself, frame by frame. *Invisibleboy* again disrupts the distance between fiction, social realism and the production apparatus of the medium. As the blinds go up, we notice that it's snowing outside the gallery windows. Or is this a bit of staging too?

If Parreno elegantly succeeds in making every step into the gallery a precariously self-aware one, where reality and theatre are indistinct, his technique quickly becomes didactic, pedagogical – we are being *taught* something about our implication in the hidden ideology of the gallery. This overarching, post-Godardian reflexivity yields only a rather etiolated pleasure – tracing the mechanics of failing, fading cultural forms within their own precinct neither abolishes them nor supersedes them. And as the little *AC/DC Snakes* (1995–2010) dotted around the Serpentine's electrical outlets – each one a concatenation of different international adapters plugged together and terminating in a nightlight – keep telling us, everything is only an expression of the system that permits it to exist. But then what, if anything, can we do about it? J.J. Charlesworth

Art exhibitions don't usually place the viewer as the subject of the show. For his first solo show in a UK public institution, French artist Philippe Parreno compactly summarises 20 years of work committed to denaturalising cinematic, theatrical and visual-art forms of experience, while interrogating the politics of presentation that underpin the art institution and the contemporary culture of the image. That such weighty problems are offered in a staging that has something in common with a funfair ride is part of the charm – and the difficulty – of Parreno's work.

Four short videoworks are shown in a cycle, as a system of automated blinds and lights draw visitors from one video to the next. *No More Reality, la manifestation* (1991) is a low-resolution clip of a group of kids protesting with banners and chanting the slogan "No more reality!" Which reality? Clearly not the one which is supposed to be transparently presented by orthodox, mass-media forms of film and video. Is "No more reality!" a demand on the part of the kids, a refusal to be representable – or a statement of fact, made by the video itself?

This tautological loop, between reality, fiction, staging, visual image and the physically present viewer winds through the other works as well. *The Boy from Mars* (2003) is a sumptuous

Straddling Cork Street and Savile Row, the Royal Academy's backdoor block on Burlington Gardens could hardly be a more potent vantage point from which to examine the interplay between art and fashion. In a year when the world's most influential pop icon can appear in a facsimile of Jana Sterbak's *Flesh Dress for Albino Anorexic* (1987) only for it to be read as a statement about vegetarianism rather than the status of the female body in a generation that has squandered its feminist heritage one Louboutin at a time, the time is right for an exhibition interrogating the role of fashion in culture.

Aware is, alas, not that exhibition – indeed it is not really an exhibition about fashion at all, so much as one about clothing as a site for art – though it has its moments, for example Helen Storey's dissolving evening dress, part of her ongoing research into low-impact materials inspired by overconsumption. The dress makes an elegant companion work to Kimsooja's *Mumbai: A Laundry Field* (2006–7), a four-screen installation showing fashion garments for the Western market being laboriously hand-washed and strung out to dry in overcrowded city neighbourhoods.

Meschac Gaba's vertiginous wigs of artificial hair braided into the shapes of modern European architectural monuments take on the interplay of tradition and modernity, north and south. They also hint at the creeping aesthetic homogeneity that comes with a globalised fashion system, which in turn seems merely the modern counterpoint to the all-appropriating imperialism needled by Yinka Shonibare's *Little Rich Girls* (2010), a wall of Victorian children's dresses.

Elsewhere, however, works feel as though they have been shoehorned into the theme. There are few moments in life when you long to see something like Sam Taylor-Wood's 1993 self-portrait in a T-shirt that reads *Fuck Suck Spank Wank*, but this is definitely one of them. Katerina Sedá's *For Every Dog a Different Master* (2007) is given such a limited display that – were one being cynical – it almost seems as though the project's focus on architecture and community were being concealed to foreground the aspect of the work (printed shirts) that suited the theme. It's always a joy to see Marina Abramovic and Ulay's *Imponderabilia* (1977), but the couple's nakedness was hardly intended as a fashion statement.

Despite nods to the artier end of the industry – Yohji, Hussein, Martin – and a delicious catwalk piece from Alexander McQueen, the exhibition seems to constantly shy away from fashion as an actual subject. It's hard not to conclude that the curators themselves have a limited interest in the subject. Putting the f-word into an exhibition title may have seemed a neat way of diverting some of the hordes queuing outside Abercrombie & Fitch up through the doors of the gallery, but a little more spunk, passion and indeed style wouldn't have gone amiss.

Hettie Judah

Helen Storey, *Say Goodbye*, 2010
(installation view), science by Professor
Tony Ryan OBE, University of Sheffield.
Photo: Andy Stagg. © the artist.
Courtesy Royal Academy of Arts, London

GSK Contemporary
Aware: Art Fashion Identity

Royal Academy of Arts, London
2 December – 30 January



João Penalva

Simon Lee Gallery, London
8 December – 29 January

Item no. 32, *Sarkin Bequest*, 2010, silver bromide print on Ilford Warm Tone Semi Matt fibre paper and pigment print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Bright White 310g paper mounted on Dibond, painted maple frame, waxed oak frame and Plexiglas, 149 x 118 x 4 cm, edition of 3 + 1 AP. Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery, London

At points in João Penalva's first exhibition at Simon Lee, the captions for several photos stray, making a pointed, almost flirtatious attempt to describe other, absent photos. In *Item No. 32, Sarkin Bequest* (2010), the large print of a sole worn black plate-stand supposedly taken from the 'Museum of Displays, Yuteval' is accompanied only by the explanation of another photo of the stand in which it supports one of a set of eighteenth-century rebus plates. Penalva is a modern exponent of the art of ekphrasis, the dramatic description of visual works, and even when he isn't describing images we can't see, this sense of missing things being described and re-presented pervades the show. This is an exhibition filled with portraits without faces, captions without images and snippets of untold narratives.

It is a miniretrospective of sorts, with film, video, photographs and books from the past six years on display, done up like a study or private collection, with dimmed lights, a TV, designer chairs and a reading room in the back. The main engine of ekphrasis is, of course, imagination: we do the legwork, giving the absent image life and verve. The moving-image work is least successful in this regard. *Dokumentarfilm (Doshi, 12. April 2003, 13.34 Uhr)* (2004) is eight minutes of a misty forest: ie, nothing, with an occasional tree peeking in. Instead of being subtle, the video is a lame retake of the imagery from Penalva's longer film *Kitsune* (2001), as well as clunky metaphor for what we're meant to be doing in the gallery, wandering around trying to make sense of things.

Penalva's strength lies more in the intermingling of word and image, and it is the five captioned black-and-white photos that form the emotive backbone of the show, offering a

sense of attentiveness and enigma. The most engaging moment comes through the caption accompanying the large photo of a whale's vertebra in *Deaf Boy's Bone* (2010). The bone elicits a memory of a young deaf neighbour to the unnamed female narrator: 'The first time he saw the bone in her house he hugged it tenderly with both arms and pressed his ear against its dark patch as if he could hear something within'. The photo and caption become mutually affected: the image of the bone first plants itself into our imagining of the scene, and after reading, we transpose the scene back onto the image in front of us; both changed and intertwined.

Penalva's assemblage of fragments attempts to be a sort of museum akin to the 'list of things that quicken the heart' displayed in Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1982). But to one thumbing through the found imagery and street shots of his artist books, it's clear this is a set of brief nonnarratives and small shards that don't sit together that well. Cumulatively, it's all very pleasant, but there is nothing very striking or in-depth within this show. His mingling of fact and fiction comes across as more an anorak archivist trying to wring wilful poetry from his collection. Lacking the contingency of some of his more extensive works to balance his methods, Penalva's poetry of the intimate risks becoming a poetry of the innocuous. *Chris Fite-Wassilak*

Dant on Drink

Drawings About Drinking in Britain

Hales Gallery, London
25 November – 8 January

On a grim January afternoon, Adam Dant's Hogarthian ink drawings about British drinking culture make particularly sober viewing. For as much as the British love to drink, they also love to feel guilty about it. Alcohol units are feared as much as calories, pregnant women are scared to look at a pinot grigio and supermarket employees lie in wait for underage buyers. If we don't watch out, Britain's national pastime will go the way of smoking: a retro indulgence now the preserve of dirty addicts.

One of Dant's epic vignettes, *Bread and Circuses* (all works 2010), takes the ironic form of Rome's Colosseum, each tier representing a different epoch in British drinking history, from England's oldest pub, to Victorian 'people's palaces', to twentieth-century Soho drinking dens and finally to twenty-first-century anonymous booze outlets like Tesco Express. Bread and circuses were the two pleasures the Romans exploited to distract the masses and keep them from interfering in politics, but TV and booze would do it in the UK these days. Dant's Colosseum is deserted, just as Britain has abandoned its pubs for 'chillaxing' on the sofa with a six-pack and a docusoap – or worse, joining a gym.

The contemporary threat of prohibition is echoed in Dant's *The Fight Between Temperance and Liquor*, which relocates Bruegel's *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* (1559) to the urban depravity of twenty-first-century Walsall, here the scene of fighting between dour dames from the nineteenth-century temperance movement and an unlikely medley of drinks mascots, such as the Babycham Bambi and Famous Grouse. But Dant's depictions of London's Shoreditch neighbourhood make Walsall look classy. *British Drinking* features seminaked Shoreditch Twats literally enacting a host of drink-related euphemisms, some more obvious than others (someone in a shopping trolley = trolleyed; a man concertinaed by a blind = blind drunk?).

Dant's meticulously detailed drawings are like a Victorian version of *Where's Wally?*, where the game is to find visual puns and rogue celebrities among the drunken tomfoolery: Gordon Brown is here with a hard-looking tart on his arm, and so is – I think – Michael Jackson. Sarah Palin makes an unexpected appearance in *Redchurch Street*, which broadly follows the sequence of the gullible young gent in Hogarth's 1735 *A Rake's Progress*, Dant's version tracking a contemporary trustafarian into the ditches of Shoreditch via the seductions of 'Bricktini' cocktails and loose women.

But for all his satirical bite and moralistic bravado, Dant clearly sides with the British drinker. After all, the artist's own studio is located in Shoreditch, and he has given himself cameos in *British Drinking*. In the same spirit, *Royal Drinking* reminds us that drinking is a (and perhaps the only)

cherished aspect of our monarchy, most recently with Will's, Kate's and Harry's blingy penchant for cocktails at West London clubs that makes them seem almost ordinary, albeit in a Sloaney way. In a still class-ridden society, the best booze might be 'by royal appointment', but we can all drink it. *Jennifer Thatcher*



Dant on Drink: Drawings About Drinking in Britain, 2010 (installation view). © the artist. Courtesy Hales Gallery, London

Thomas Houseago

What Went Down

Modern Art Oxford & Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Oxford
11 December – 20 February

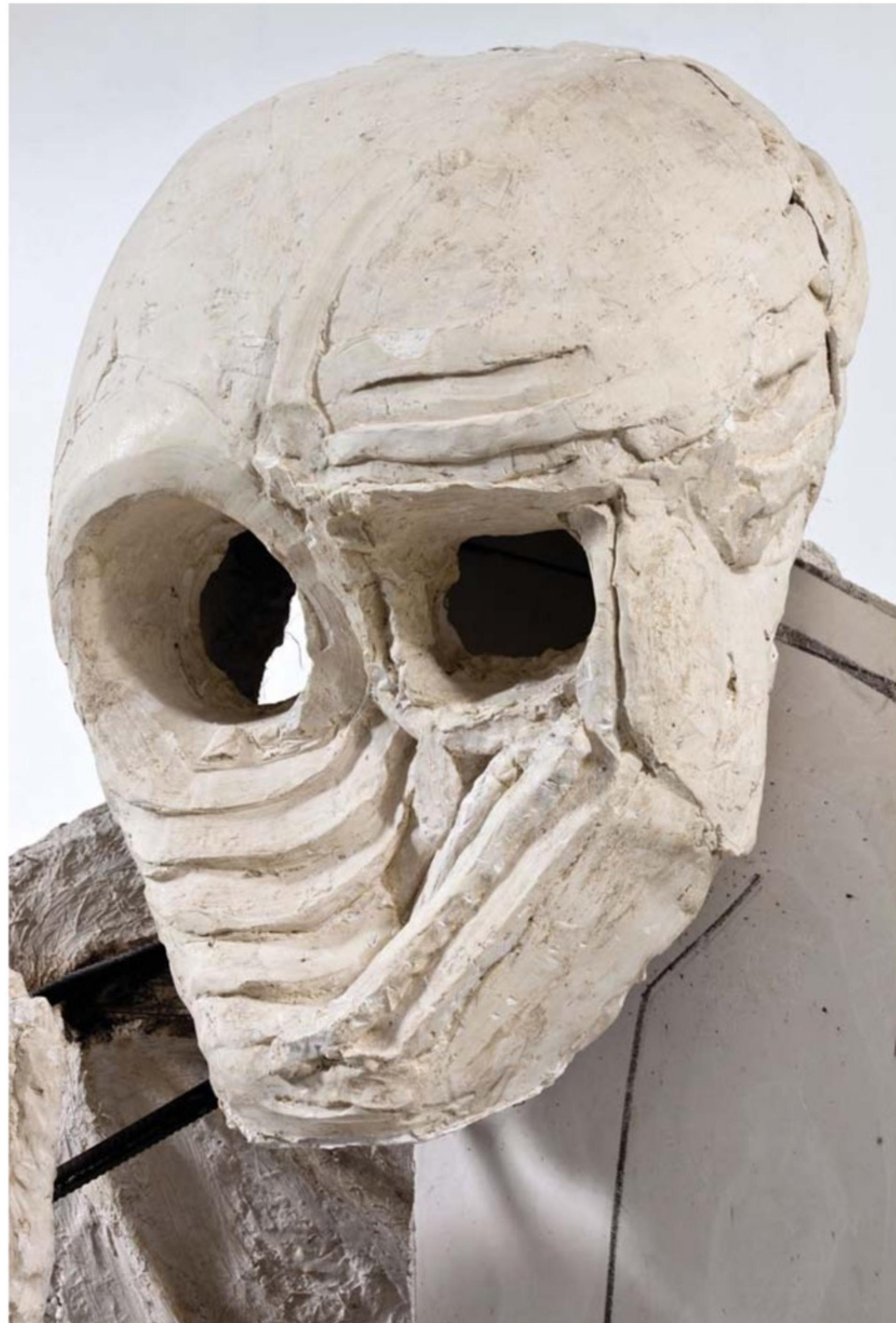
My first reaction on seeing this show was, simply, surprise. Surprise, first of all, that I've not seen more of Houseago's work than I have (my fault), and surprise, too, that I enjoyed it so much. As I headed from Modern Art Oxford to the Ashmolean, where the second half of *What Went Down* is installed, it was hard not to feel a sense of renewed confidence in the ability of figurative sculpture to examine its own cultural and material history.

This is Houseago's first major solo show in a UK public gallery, though the broad shoulders of his figurative works are more than capable of bearing the weight (and the vagaries) of popular scrutiny while losing nothing of their vitality and intrigue. Appropriately, for an artist whose career has taken him from Scotland to England, from England to the Netherlands and Belgium, and then to California, where he is now, these works capture simultaneously something of the weighty confidence of European high Modernism, northern English phlegm and late-twentieth-century West Coast lassitude.

None of which should leave anyone in any doubt as to whether Houseago's work is serious – it is. It is also large. Working principally with such traditional materials as wood, plaster, hessian, iron and steel, Houseago exploits the iconographies of classical and modernist sculpture in order to subvert them, mocking their and his pretensions at the same time as he cleaves to them. What is striking, too, albeit paradoxically, is these works' lightness, an effect achieved in part through the incorporation of drawing into his sculptural works, as in the case of *Baby* (2009) – the weight and scale of one half of this enormous crouching Prometheus-figure contrasting powerfully with the sketchy outlines which form the other, drawn half.

Houseago has a deftness of touch, then, and a sensitivity towards the viewer's encounter with the object and the space around it, which contradicts the apparent crudeness of his works' constructions. Thus on closer inspection their monumentality is thrown into question, their very physicality becoming both a physical and an existential burden. As implacable, incomprehensible and uncomprehending as these figures may seem, however, the hollow gaze offered by works such as *Cyclops No. 1* (2009) may also embody something much softer, as if conscious, dimly, of their own cognitive limitations.

Decapitated figures and disembodied heads are a consistent feature of Houseago's work, making appearances here in *Crouching Figure* (1998), *Machine Mask I* (2010) and *Giant Mask (Cave)* (2010). Situated somewhere close to the heart of these works is the disjunction between surface, material and support, or between the immutable and ideal, and the imperfect, degraded and perpetually degrading actual, which nevertheless retains a trace of what was or could have been. If, as some critics have alleged, Houseago's work really does appear increasingly like public sculpture (*Giant*, 2010, is currently installed in the forecourt of the Ashmolean), then this represents something of a much-needed municipal coup. Confident, ambitious stuff, *What Went Down* is the work of an artist for whom success has been hard won, yet who has had the courage to pursue his postmodern antic convictions irrespective of popular opinion. *Luke Heighton*



Baby, (detail) 2009. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen. © the artist. Courtesy Michael Werner Gallery, New York

According to psychoanalyst Adam Phillips, 'children are real Darwinian pleasure-seekers' with 'a very strong sense early on of what they're interested in and what they're not'. David Hopkins's latest curatorial collaboration with the Fruitmarket Gallery, following 2006's *Dada's Boys*, focuses on 'the dark poetics of childhood' in the work of US and UK artists who came to prominence in the 1980s and '90s. In common with *Dada's Boys*, Hopkins's approach in *Childish Things* is subtly revisionist in attempting to highlight an art-historical lineage between aspects of Dada/Surrealism and contemporary art, though in this exhibition the links are tacit rather than explicit.

In works by artists including Louise Bourgeois, Helen Chadwick, Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley, Hopkins seeks to shift the emphasis from generic themes of critical postmodern art practice (abjection; identity politics; postconceptualism; consumerism) towards a more specific discourse around childhood/adult anxiety and the politics of play. Susan Hiller's *An Entertainment* (1990) encourages us to reexamine the apparent binary oppositions which divide notions of childhood and adulthood through the subversive repetition of the violent narrative of Punch and Judy shows. Adults are seen from a child's perspective in these horror stories which pass for children's entertainment. Equally sinister is Robert Gober's empty, cagelike *Playpen* (1986) devoid of toys, which appears as a miniature prison. This handcrafted structure recalls the sharp sense of abandonment, isolation and claustrophobia such 'environments' can ignite in small children.

If Chadwick's and Bourgeois's works represent a serious, confessional or autobiographical response to childhood and memory, the works of Koons, McCarthy and Kelley get closest to the sense of 'play noir' at the heart of Hopkins's thesis. McCarthy's gargantuan readymade *Children's Anatomical Educational Figure* (c. 1990), for example, is quite literally the 'beast in the nursery', neatly illustrating Baudelaire's claim in his essay 'A Philosophy of Toys' (1853) that in their dismembering and transgressive 'play', 'the overriding desire of most children is to get at and see the soul of their toys'. In Charlie Brooker's satirical BBC review show *Screenwipe*, the presenter revealed his disgust at Dolmio pasta sauce advertisements, which so unsettled him with their juxtaposition of 'puppets and real food'. In its grubby, careworn quality, McCarthy's figure likewise succinctly sums up theories of abjection.

Kelley's *Innards* (1990) is less successful in this respect. A series of knitted objects strewn across a blanket, the work seems compromised by its rather sanitised placement on a low plinth rather than the gallery floor. As ever, Koons's works manage to be simultaneously funny and disturbing through

the uneasy and *unheimlich* scaling-up of screamingly kitsch toys to larger-than-human proportions. For some, *Childish Things* may be overly illustrative or heavy-handed in its curatorial authorship, but it is nonetheless a rigorous reexamination of works we often read all too quickly. Hopkins's success lies in the way he invites us to reconsider artists who often seem overexposed as orthodox examples of postmodern practice. By reconnecting with the works and being open to the dialogues between them, we can reassess how such practices are placed in art history. In terms of disturbing notions of childhood, perhaps the next exhibition could be a solo show of John Waters's chilling, uproarious *Playdate* (2006), his sculptural enactment of a baby Michael Jackson meeting a baby Charles Manson – dressed, respectively, in fetching pink and black romper suits.

Susannah Thompson

Childish Things

Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh

19 November – 23 January



Paul McCarthy, *Children's Anatomical Educational Figure*, c. 1990. Photo: Gautier Deblonde. © Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, London & New York

Anselm Kiefer

Next Year in Jerusalem

Gagosian Gallery, West 24th Street, New York
6 November – 18 December



Entering *Next Year in Jerusalem* is a bit like going from Disney World into an amusement park devoted to the 'horrors' of war. The gallery, itself massive, is crowded with huge canvases and vitrines, some as high as five metres. These, in turn, are crammed with items pulled from the iconographic repertoire Anselm Kiefer has long used to evoke Europe's violent history: winged palettes, furrowed fields, storm-tossed oceans, sackcloth-like dresses, a submarine hull and an aeroplane fuselage, the last two rendered in lead. Grey tonalities reign from the overexposed, amateur-looking black-and-white photographs collaged with withered branches to the crusty impasto of large paintings and the cracked clay floors of encased *mise en scènes* — these shattered materials standing, one assumes, for war-torn humanity. Such devices function like the music in movies, eliciting the bathos which passes for empathy. That all works are dated no earlier than 2009–10 enhances the impression of the stuff's being churned out to create just such an effect.

It is not clear, except on the most facile level, how these evocations of cataclysm relate to the show's title, which is drawn from the words that conclude the Passover seder. These are scrawled, in a transliteration from the Hebrew, across a wall facing the gallery entrance. Historically the Diaspora experience was so oppressive that the hope of deliverance expressed at the end of the annual celebration of the Exodus from Egypt, and more broadly, of freedom, was at once understandable and extraordinary in its resigned optimism. Today the phrase has obvious political implications. Before the modern era, Jerusalem was a place both unattainable and unimaginable for most Jews. The line expressed a millennial dream and the commitment to becoming worthy of 'Jerusalem' through constant ethical improvement.

Is it a similar dynamic of faith and ethics — the convergence of the divine and the profane — that the artist is trying to plumb? Kiefer's works allude to things like the Burning Bush — here a dry plant festooned with painted fire — and the Merkaba, the chariot that, according to the Kabbalah, moves between heaven and earth. But ultimately, with their scrawled titles, Kiefer's pieces come off as rudimentary illustrations of such miracles, or as pairings of elements from his visual catalogue of terms from, among other sources, the Old Testament, the Gnostic Gospels and Germanic epics of virtue and faith triumphant.

What undergirds this show is not a sense of humility in search of the ineffable, or an ethical and spiritual constancy, but its opposite: a conviction in the transcendent, ineffable power of the artist's own work, as underscored by the glossary of terms distributed during the show and the image of the palette rising phoenixlike in several paintings. Driven by ego, the work reinforces the pettiness of the material world it is meant to transcend. *Joshua Mack*

Merkaba, 2010, mixed media, 320 x 560 x 230 cm. Photo: Charles Duprat. © the artist. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, New York

The West at Sunset

Abrons Arts Center, New York
9 December – 20 February

The Abrons Arts Center's ambitious group exhibition *The West at Sunset* pins its theoretical premise on René Daumal's surrealist novel *Mount Analogue*, published posthumously in 1952. Allegorically detailing an ascension to the peak of its namesake mountain, which is located on a strangely *Lost*-like island littered with impossibly spherical crystals, or 'peragrams', and linked directly to heaven, the novel is an extended spiritual journey told metaphorically through natural landscapes, its human denizens and elemental symbolism.

Thoughtfully curated by Adrian Geraldo Saldaña, *The West at Sunset* includes work that manifests this spiritual journey to sometimes underwhelming, sometimes evocative effect. Alberto Borea's *Apareces* (2009) fits in the former camp. Featuring footage of the artist scaling a mountain in Peru and gazing melancholically over landscapes, the video bears interest only for its allegorical relationship to *Mount Analogue*. As such, it points to the problem of an exhibition that allegorises an allegory: it can lapse into a kind of metatextual muddle.

Many pieces hobbled by one-note simplicity are seemingly shoehorned into Daumalian symbolism. For Adam Parker Smith's *Umbrella Cloud* (2008–10), swelling and circling bursts of floating umbrellas are metaphorically related to the clouds on Mount Analogue. While I suppose the shoe fits, that relationship seems too hewn to its literary source, and belies the fact that the installation only provokes on an aesthetic level. The work also points to a question facing any curator: to what extent should a curatorial framework frame? Or perhaps more to the point, is the theoretical framework a supplement to the work at hand or is it compensating for what's lacking?

Unsurprisingly, the strongest work here either relies less on *Mount Analogue* or playfully transgresses its allegorical moralism. Rachel Pollak's delicate and fey gouache paintings depict simple, vaguely Shaker rituals, yet the patterned portrayals of separate male and female tasks draw into sharp relief gender mores and social norms intrinsic both to religious practices and to seventeenth-century allegories, such as *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), to which the title of this series of works, *Delectable Mountains* (2010), refers.

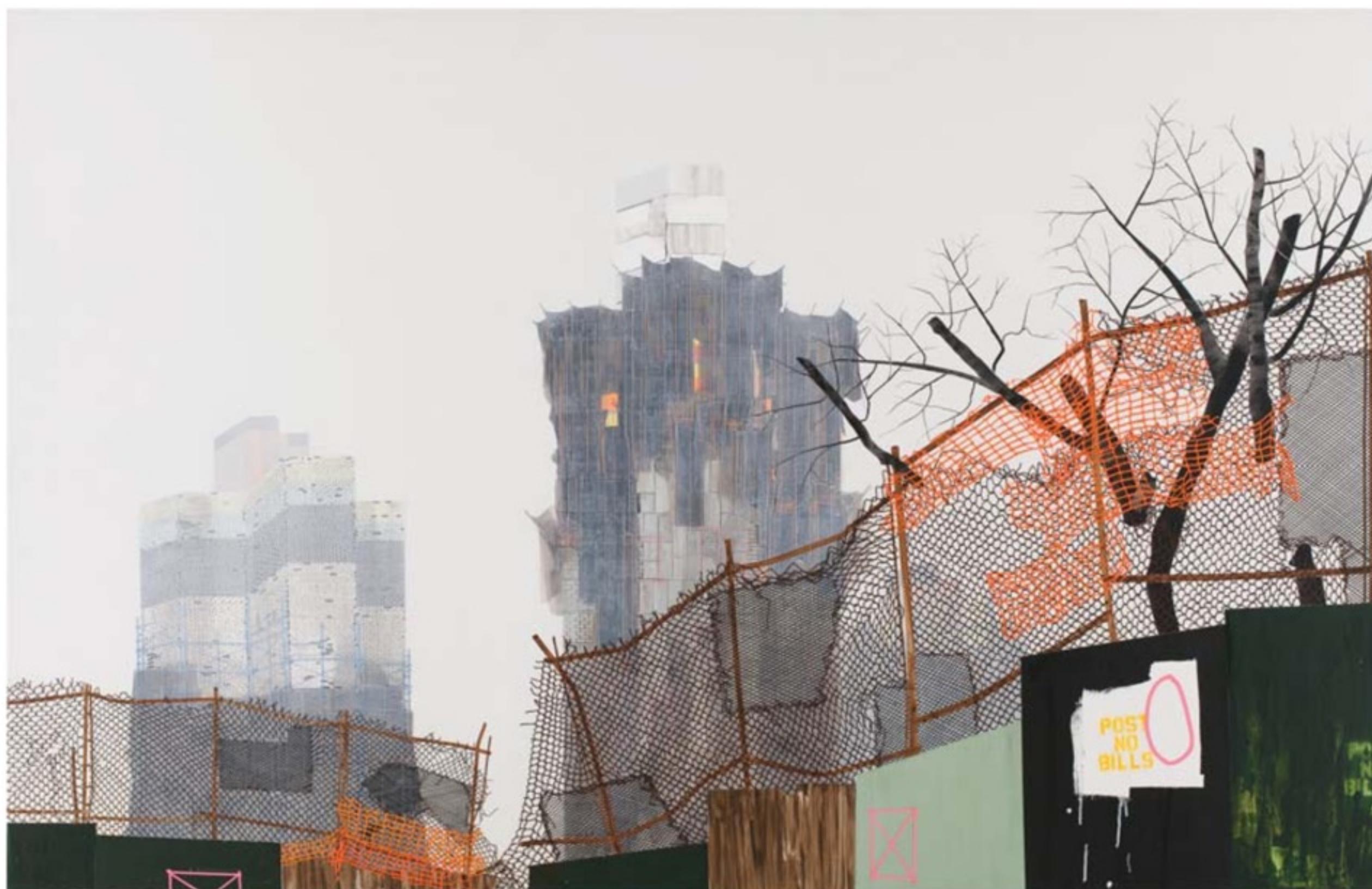
Perhaps the most evocative work is Cyrus Saint Amand Poliakoff's 'guided imagery programme' – consisting of a seating area with an auditory track and several ancillary objects – which explores the science of whale lore as well as whale behaviour, such as sounding. Accompanied by clip-art whale sounds, the artist narrates a journey through the sea in a hilarious, soothing therapy voice. In order to gain a "watery knowledge of grace, forgiveness and compassion", he asks the visitor to imagine his cock hard, its inside shaped for slippery measuring. The long metal rods laid out on a small table gain new meaning as whale sounding takes an unexpected turn into penis self-sounding. Poliakoff assures his listener that if "you don't wish to have a cock, you can use mine", and that "you can sound me, or we can sound each other". As the kind of watery journey Matthew Barney and Björk might find productive, *Whale Lore* (2010) is both unsettling and funny, an allegory undone. *David Everitt Howe*

Rachel Pollak, *Untitled (Delectable Mountains)*, 2010. Courtesy the artist



Planet of Slums

Third Streaming, New York
17 December – 5 February



Mike Davis's 2006 survey of global poverty, *Planet of Slums*, hit the neoliberal consensus like an earthquake hits a favela. There it was, in Davis's flamethrower prose, with numbers to boot: more humans around the globe now dwell in cities than not, and they do so increasingly in slums, not because of some inherent degeneracy or collective lack of will to better their lives, but because economic liberalisation – deregulation, privatisation, tariff elimination, etc, often administered by the IMF and WTO's Structural Adjustment Programmes – put them there. 'How the other half lives' has of course been of interest to activists and reformers since industrialisation put slums on the map. And mapping those slums – that is, making them visible – has been a central strategy of progressive social agendas ever since. But how those slums are made visible – in reports, pictures, documentaries, fictions – is the founding question in the politics of representation, to which any exhibition that would take Davis's title for its own must answer.

Omar Lopez-Chahoud and LaToya Ruby Frazier, the cocurators of such an exhibition, at Soho's promising new entrant Third Streaming, are well placed to do so. Frazier, an exceptional new photographer in her own right, and Lopez-Chahoud, an indefatigable curator fresh from the triumph of his previous NYC outing, *Lush Life* (nominated in Rob Pruitt's 2010 Art Awards), have gathered an assortment of works that picture, in one way or another, either the peripheries that evoke slum life today or the processes that have produced it, or both.

Strongest here are works by Ishmael Randall Weeks, Erik Benson and Takashi Horisaki. Weeks's precariously constructed cut-paper collage of a narrow urban alleyway, *Perspectives II (Modern Vernacular)* (all works 2010), and his video of a front-end loader 'resetting' a hastily constructed cinderblock folly, *Pukusana (After C. Smith)*, capture perfectly the tension between material (and material's) stability and imperatives of adaptability and motility. With the large painting *Brownfield (Site)*, Benson continues his exploration of urban edge-zones, the kind of unwanted and unusable surplus spaces that stand as the visual analogue of the unwanted and unusable labour that global slums serve to warehouse. And Horisaki's *Laundry Day 1* (2010) provides the show with its necessary physical texture, a traipsing of clotheslines bearing fabric casts of address numbers and architectural details from 'underserved neighbourhoods' (a condescending contemporary euphemism for 'slum'). The work itself was made with the help of 'at-risk youth' (another terminological fiasco, this time for the desperately poor).

Yet there is a problem here. These works, and others, primarily photographic ones by Manuel Acevedo, Elisabeth Subrin, Rishi Singhai and Lori Waselchuk, evoke a general emptiness in their imaging of so many urban no-man's-lands. These are pictures of 'neoliberal melancholy', the structural squandering of opportunity. But they don't picture slums. If Lagos or Mumbai or Kinshasa has any lessons to teach, it's that slums are dense and crowded – really fucking crowded. Representing their mesh-works and flows of base materials and bare life would seem to be the task, and the politics, at hand. *Jonathan T.D. Neil*

Erik Benson, *Brownfield (Site)*, 2010, acrylic on canvas over panel, 152 x 239 cm

Emily Roysdon*If I Don't Move Can You Hear Me?*

Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive

12 December – 6 March

Through a body of gestures that draw from art history, social theory and performance, Emily Roysdon choreographs her first US solo museum exhibition as a *pas de deux* between intimate and improbable partners. 'I develop projects from the relationship between words', the American artist writes at the outset of her new zine, *A Queer Relational Associative Project Dictionary*, which taps pairs of collaborators to explore the vocabulary of the works on view. The resulting efforts follow from one such term, 're-purpose', as words like 'movement' and 'Modernism', thread into a contemporary *parole*, propelled by dialogues that multiply interpretations instead of fixing definitions.

If the zine deploys polysemy as a means of queering specific linguistic targets, Roysdon's other projects turn its operations on aesthetic and public spaces. A two-channel video collaboration with performance artist MPA, for example, shows views of a section of Stockholm's central square, Sergels Torg, designed for public gatherings and demonstrations (*Untitled from 'Sense and Sense'*, 2010). Roysdon's fascination with the site stems from the potential discrepancies between regulated and public uses, and in expanding this register, she stages an action across the black-and-white triangularly tiled expanse with a slightness that belies its public purpose (slight enough that only a few pedestrians stop to watch). Nodding to VALIE EXPORT's *Body Configurations* (1972–6), ORLAN's *MesuRAGEs* (1965–83) and the simple vertical trickery of Cocteau's *The Blood of a Poet* (1930), MPA lies against the ground of the square and, rolling her hips and joints like a wooden marionette, conjures the illusion of walking.

This is physically taxing work, which MPA performs in a stuttering gait that slows down the moving image to its static, Muybridge-esque substrates. In so doing, she meets Roysdon's professed desire to 'deconstruct a natural sense of time' and to focus on body and frame, while also narrowing the margin between this action and a framed poster, *Sense and Sense* (2010), that

roughly operates as its score, containing performance notes ('The arm precedes the leg. Keep the feet flexed') and looser auguries ('From above I saw 64 black triangles, 64 white triangles, and a public address system being prepared').

Roysdon achieves similar enfoldings of score, gesture and document throughout a new series of mounted mixed-media prints that lean against two opposing plywood shelves. Atop digital images of improvised actions in the Berkeley Art Museum, the artist silkscreens dancers, black and red geometries, and charcoal strokes, which mimic the concrete stairs and seams of the museum, thus bringing screenprinting into a performative relationship with the institution at large and its photographic representations. The dancers themselves are captured in portraitlike shots, spanned into rows of poses, and substituted, in one print, by an analogous formation of red dots. This slippage between the social, choreographic and formal aspects of movement echoes Roysdon's work at Sergels Torg. Indeed, the deadpan identification of the square's aesthetic and organisational form with MPA's lone performer could easily default on the side of the regulatory, but Roysdon's 'address system' succeeds, like these other works, from her visionary scope and economy of means. *Tyler Coburn*

Untitled from If I Don't Move Can You Hear Me?, 2010, digital collage. Courtesy the artist



Anthony Pearson

David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles
11 December – 5 February

Anthony Pearson's photographic accidents, writ large in brilliant solarisations and crosshatches of light, have all the markings of a material practice based on aleatory interactions with the primary equipment of his craft, the camera. Once snapped, these photos take on second lives as objects, the rhythms and scratches often (as here) made form in oozing sculptures and cement-plintheed steel. These accidents of light made from a faulty lens and a hermetic process linger like black-hole suns, like alien masterpieces found in crashed spacecraft. Despite this methodology's propensity to unemotive modes of photographic abstraction, these works seem to mood and brood, their *Sturm und Drang* swishing out of the photographic frame and into the hardened liquid of cast bronze.

But material investigations in this closed system are just the vehicle, not the drive. The drive is an obsession with systems of organisation and a fetish for surface, both of which hearken back to the artist's previous life as a master record collector, where surface, organisation and the ability to find and deliver (investigate, even) are a dominating force. Looking at the sculptures lingering around the edges of the gallery, one gets the feeling that the black ooze has the same smooth, sexy black surface of the finest vinyl a record company ever pressed, the hallowed 'mint' of the serious connoisseur.

To look at these things as just material process – darkroom ass-grabbing and simple closed-system 'mediations on the sunset art' – is to miss their gothy charm, their role as a record collector's fetish and the weird relationship we all have with objects. Whatever formal purity they have (which turns us on) becomes adulterated by our desire for them. What is a rare, sought-after record to the collector who digs through storage spaces and garages, shacks and thrift stores getting coated in the muck of disuse? To aficionados, the objecthood of these anointed LPs reigns supreme. The old-style camera, with its chemicals and cellulose, is, like the record, a dying technology, kept alive by those who love its thingness, the warmth the medium delivers to its content, the accidents and limitations of its form.

There have been more than a few dissertations' worth of hubbub about the long dark teatime of both the record and, more lately, the analogue camera. But the artefacts of a dying empire nevertheless wend their ways into the hands of collectors and historians, who dream the dreams of the makers and former masters as they handle them, fingering their surfaces and figuring the stories of these tokens, this art.

Andrew Berardini



Untitled (Tablet), 2010, bronze relief with cobalt patina, 21 x 16 x 4 cm. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

The Golden Ass, 2008, production still.
Photo: Mara McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and the Box, Los Angeles



For his second exhibition at the Box, Julien Bismuth spent some quality time with a bunch of wild asses in rural California. The artist shot his new two-channel video, *The Golden Ass* (all works 2010), over the course of two trips to visit the Wild Burro Rescue in Olancha (rhymes suggestively with Don Quixote's La Mancha) and Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue in Tehachapi, two sanctuaries for the nonnative feral donkey populations increasingly endangered across the southeast of the Golden State. Both of the video's channels are shot in an artless, handheld manner befitting the dumb reputation of Bismuth's subjects. One plays on a monitor, showing the donkeys in their refuge, alternately curious about and indifferent to several giant white weather balloons that the artist introduced to float and bounce through the landscape. Roughly the same scale, donkey and balloon are foils for each other's discrete opacity. Punctuating the scenery like so many inflated periods (enough to constitute several scrambled ellipses denoting asinine speechlessness), the balloons often catch the light and appear, fleetingly, like big holes punched in the picture, as if abstracting or redacting the documentary.

The video's other channel is projected large on the wall, dominating the main gallery and picturing the unemployed beasts of burden nearly lifesize (feral donkey as recession-era symbol of the Democrats?) as they mill about, graze and bray in the rescue's protected pen. At a distance, their sandy, dun hides camouflage them against the greyish-brown and ochre terrain of the low Sierras, as inconspicuous and thinglike as boulders – or rather, disappearing in plain sight, just like Bismuth's adjacent suite of monochrome *Dun Paintings #1–6*, where each square canvas, presented in varying degrees of completion, is hung on a section of wall painted the same unique hue.

Bismuth locates the viewer in a hybrid pastoral by flipping between wildlife and domestication, openness and enclosure, nature and labour, animate and inanimate, animal and thing, animal and human. A couple devoted caretakers brush, pet and murmur intimacies to their charges, shifting our focus to the relationship between minder and donkey – a dynamic shaped by the titular invocation of Apuleius's picaresque novel, *The Golden Ass*, in which a young man's (read: the artist's) fascination with magic leads to his accidental transformation into a dull and dumb donkey. Bismuth's supplementary text hints at his project's interest in the possibility of interspecies subjectivity, and in an expanded notion of consciousness that would be wide enough to empathise with the inanimateness of things as well as with the affectless mystery of animals.

Bismuth's prolonged looking at and cohabiting meditation on this particular imperilled, misfit species is an apt consideration of the status of the animal in general at a time when research is beginning to indicate greater intelligence and awareness in nonhuman beings. The animal – representing the fear of the unknowable and the exploited – has always occupied an unresolved and tortured place in politics and human affairs, beginning with the perennial figure of the scapegoat, a close cousin to the heavily saddled ass. *Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer*

Julien Bismuth
The Golden Ass

The Box, Los Angeles
16 December – 29 January

Christopher Orr

Hauser & Wirth, Zurich
20 November – 29 January

A sense of quasi-mysticism has never been far below the surface of Christopher Orr's paintings. In this new body of work, though, it is complemented by an unnerving sense of the occult. The 13 canvases here find the London-based Scottish painter at his most claustrophobic and intimate, and while there's no radical departure in style – the broad oil strokes are still applied in their customary precise manner – Orr invokes a cinematic sensibility, asking the viewer to consider the figures he depicts as individuals with character, emotion and narrative, a far cry from the overwhelmed role they frequently play as dots in his more widescreen landscape works.

The historical sublime, to which Orr is most often linked (barely an article gets written on the artist without reference being made to Caspar David Friedrich, this review proving to be no different), is not altogether absent from this show; it's just as if the artist has zoomed in on details of his earlier works, uncovering the melodramatic vignettes that exist within his habitual dramatic scenery. In *The Promise of Air* (all works 2010), a man in 1950s-style garb glances down, avoiding the viewer's gaze, intently observing a free-floating string of tiny lights hovering just above his shoulders. He could be a character in a Hitchcock film, given the styling and melodramatic demeanour (thoughts of the director are triggered again on encountering a storm of falling bird carcasses – a tsunami of plumage and beaks – in *Your Scattered Bodies Go*). The same man in the same pose returns, seen from a slightly wider angle, in *Speak My Language*; if the painting details the full cut of the suit and the protagonist's strange act of pencilling marks on a rock surface, it also reveals that the subject is located in a murky painterly void, akin to the gaping skies of Orr's sublime forebears.

Orr has darkened his interest in the fantastical, with repeated depictions of magical practice and supernatural occurrences. In *Silent One*, for example, a sightseeing couple stare intently at a floating head emerging from the abyss of a ravine; in *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*, a woman stares up at a night sky speckled with circular lights, perhaps oblivious to the transparent figure who merges into the gloaming beside her. In *Lighten Our Darkness*, two women in pinafores cast a spell, fine beams of light emanating from a glowing orb at their feet. These gothic references, eliciting a slight shiver down the spine of the viewer, are invoked again through the repeated geometric shapes – aping the witchery of the orb's beams – that the artist abstractly etches into the surface of the diminutive paintings. *Speak My Language* bears an overlay of disrupted triangles; so does the framework faintly drawn around the sparsely filled centre of the least figurative of the paintings, *Ghostly Monarch*, the angular shape bordered by a jungle of heavily worked abstract elements. Orr seems to be drawing a parallel between the inner workings of a painting – the structure of Renaissance perspective and the weighting of paint application – with the dominant symbols of the paranormal occult, in which both exert an untoward, autocratic power over subject and viewer.

Oliver Basciano

Lighten Our Darkness, 2010,
oil on linen, 23 x 19 cm. © the
artist. Courtesy the artist,
Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, and IBID
Projects, London



Neo-Barbarism

Rothschild 69, Tel Aviv
2 December – 15 January

Total chaos welcomes you into *Neo-Barbarism*. The temporary gallery, above a popular bar on the trendy Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv, presents 17 hard-to-watch videoworks in a cluttered, unaccommodating setting. Yet somewhere amid the impossible noise and cluttered view, between images of people vomiting and cursing, between butchery and suicide bombers, a special moment in Israeli art is being defined. It is an uncivilised moment, characterised by vulgarity and grotesque images, but it is current, urgent and relevant. It carries with it the understanding that in an absurd time, art has to use absurd tools; that in a reality where truth and falsity are constantly confused, art cannot just point to the questions – it must become the questions themselves.

In Ancient Greece, barbarians were those who didn't speak Greek; through their exclusion, the enlightened civilisation was defined. In modern Israel, 'neo-barbarian' artists are choosing to use the dominant language (in terms of both speech and aesthetics) in order to undermine the state and its structure. In what curators Naomi Aviv and Noam Segal call 'discourse of treason' (in opposition to the 'discourse of loyalty' that has been at the centre of a local debate around the 'Citizenship Law'), the artists simultaneously betray their society, their aesthetic norms and the medium they are using. In Roei Rosen's *Hilarious* (2010), a standup act collapses into itself. The inappropriate jokes, ranging from 9/11 to the Israeli occupation, make the crowd laugh and sweat, as if they were trying to cleanse themselves from images and thoughts that can no longer be digested. Sharif Waked's *To Be Continued...* (2009), meanwhile, plays with the familiar format of a suicide-bomber video. Waked's version of the monologue – usually recorded on the eve of the fatal mission – includes the standard rifle, keffiyeh and big open book; instead of quoting the Koran, however, the actor is reading from *Arabian Nights*. The suicide bomber, like Scheherazade, is trying to buy more time before his execution. But here – as is always the case in this part of the world – the executioner is also the executed; the hunter is also the victim.

This vicious cycle is also present in Maya Zack's *Black and White Rule* (2010), where two poodles on an oversize chessboard submit to the orders of their trainer while being monitored and registered by a librarian/scientist/artist. But when the routine is disrupted by a cruel fight, the viewer finds himself wondering who is the controller and who is being controlled. Questions of control are further examined in Gal Weinstein's *Can't Put My Finger On* (2010), which refers to the ongoing debate regarding biometric databases (recently approved for use in IDs within Israel) and the consequent loss of privacy, via the artist's burning of an image of his own fingerprint.

Neo-Barbarism is not an easy show to take in. Not only due to its harsh images, problematic sound structure and vulgar texts, but also to the fact that the show asks the viewer to leave logic behind and surrender instead to absurdity and the macabre. Here, in a somewhat dadaist move, meaning arises out of meaningless moments. As in Sharon Balaban's mesmerising video triptych *Schlagfix* (2010), in which eagles tear apart a camel's stomach, poke apart the artist's pregnant belly then indulge in whipped cream, it is what it is – sweet and eerie, violent but beautiful. Like art often is; like life always is. *Vardit Gross*



Sharif Waked, *To Be Continued...*, 2009

Cosima von Bonin

Cosima von Bonin's Far Niente...

Witte de With, Rotterdam

10 October – 9 January

What's lazy about a lazy Susan? The diners, of course – stationary while the feast rotates before them. The question is prompted by Cosima von Bonin's exhibition (and its title: *Cosima von Bonin's Far Niente for Witte de With's Sloth Section, Loop #01 of the Lazy Susan Series, A Rotating Exhibition 2010–2011*), which in its bounteousness gives the impression of the artist as overworked lackey, rustling up endless dishes for a sedentary and corpulent audience. Admittedly just one of the Cologne-based artist's sculptural tableaux actually spins on a revolving platform: the typically humorous, typically engaging *Amateur Dramatics* (WDW's *Lazy Susan Version* & MVO's *Bone Beats*) (all works 2010), an arrangement that includes a velour rabbit apparently pinned to the ground by dubplates attached to its ears, plaster seahorses, a parasol and a sign that reads 'Art Is Not a Natural Science'. But you may, to (over)extend the metaphor, graze handsomely at this banquet without putting in a great deal of effort; von Bonin's aesthetic tends towards the sweetly cartoonish and is distinctly moreish. The results could seem like glib morsels, yet in von Bonin's hands a post-post-Pop Art of the outsize-soft-toy variety is possessed of edge, verve and surprising complexity.

Encircling the show are concepts of productivity and value, explored both in terms of traditional gender roles – key components of von Bonin's output are her labour-intensive stitched textile works that are presented as both wall-mounted pieces that riff on images and motifs found elsewhere in three dimensions, and as freestanding forms that require physical as well as conceptual negotiation – and more widely in relation to types of activity and experience, how they are codified and framed, and how we position ourselves in relation to them. A wry detachment, a raised eyebrow over proceedings, governs the achievements and mental states contained by or hinted at in her cast of characters. Snoozing animals proliferate. In *Idler, Lezzer, Tosspiece (The WDW Swing Nose & Scallop Version)*, a Pinocchio-like figure, his extended nose a pipe that threads through the gallery, is a monument to inactivity from the artist's series of *Idlers*. (A variation of the sculpture, *The Idler's Playground*, is sited near a roundabout on Rotterdam's Hofplein.) Sloth doesn't immediately spring to mind when considering von Bonin's work, especially in the context of a show that tours this year from Rotterdam to Bristol, Geneva and Cologne, each incarnation an opportunity for addition and adjustment. But the word crops up repeatedly in titles, along with the phrase '*Il dolce far niente*' – the sweetness of doing nothing.

Von Bonin can add her name to a long list of artists and writers from Diderot onwards for whom idleness stands as a form of resistance against everything that is generally held to be useful in society. Indeed, a somewhat bolshie, antiestablishment streak runs through this show, as witnessed in neons in the form of lit cigarettes that, glowing seductively, seem like paeans to the lost art of smoking. The invitation to draw (polluting) breath, retreat, divert meaning, take pleasure in the ever-more illicit act of doing nowt is manifestly the most vital aspect of von Bonin's generous art. Her conspicuous overproduction is a satire of the work ethic. It suggests that we should aspire to something rather different.

Martin Coomer

Missy Misdemeanour (The Vomiting White Chick, Riley [Loop #5], MVO's Voodoo Beat & MVO's Rocket Blast Beat), 2010 (installation view, Witte de With, Rotterdam). Photo: Bob Goedewaagen. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Neu, Berlin



Eija-Liisa Ahtila

The Annunciation

Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris
4 December – 8 January

The nature of a miracle is at the core of Eija-Liisa Ahtila's most recent film, *The Annunciation* (2010), a 33-minute, three-screen installation opportunely presented at Marian Goodman Gallery over the Christmas period. A textual quotation of Jakob von Uexküll's concept of *umwelt* (German for 'environment') introduces the film and provides the grounding for the Finnish artist's reflection upon the conditions that could allow us to comprehend an event as a miracle. While the German biologist and philosopher insisted on the coexistence (besides our human awareness) of innumerable understandings of the world(s), all simultaneously defined by each living species' unique perception of our shared universe, Ahtila uses an exposure of filmic mechanics – from the screenplay to the screens themselves – to engage or proliferate different points of view that may help us approach the miraculous through the ordinary. "Can something already familiar fulfil the criteria for a miracle?" the narrator's voiceover asks as a prologue while, onscreen, shots of ravens and bullfinches in the frosty landscape of southern Finland follow one another.

Set in an artist's studio and divided into three acts – the casting, the rehearsal and the actual 'play' that are punctuated by many scans of late-Middle Ages paintings and altarpieces depicting the Christian episode – Ahtila's contemporary remake of the Annunciation symbolically challenges and breaks into three screens the singular point of view of Renaissance perspective. The parts (Virgin Mary, Archangel Gabriel, etc) are distributed during the first act among nonprofessional actresses, who are cast from a Helsinki institute for women's support services. It should be noted that the director of the play in Ahtila's *Annunciation* is the only role attributed to a real comedian, Kati Outinen, who is known for her many appearances in the films of Finnish director Aki Kaurismäki, and who favours low-key acting. The three acts, which are based both on the artist's screenplay and on the nonprofessional actresses' improvisation, confront us immediately with various interpretations of the miracle, depending on the intimate faith that each participant is free to act out.

The biblical Annunciation effectively functions as an encounter between two understandings of the world, the holy and the human (the question of faith being subsidiary). In Ahtila's installation, the multiple projections and the exposure of various stages of production become a way to open onto another knowledge, outside our private beliefs, but also outside our shared history and culture (what von Uexküll would call our limited human seizing of the world, which is symbolised in Ahtila's piece by the unique perspective of Renaissance imagery throughout the whole film). Amid all these points of view, we find ourselves wondering if experiencing the unfamiliar in the familiar could be the key to the miraculous (or at least its sentiment). It's a reminder that Ahtila is a major force within a generation of artists who question the means of common narrative structures, from documentary to fiction, in order to comprehend more clearly the constitution of our collective psyche. *Violaine Boutet de Monvel*



The Annunciation, 2010, 3-channel projected high-definition installation, 33 min. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York & Paris. © 2010 Crystal Eye/Kristallisilmä Oy, Helsinki

Absalon

KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin
28 November – 20 February

Trust me: to write about Absalon's artistic practice is a challenge. So much of his oeuvre is haloed by the apotheosis of its maker, by a picture-book romantic life and by a tragically early death (in 1993, age twenty-eight). Born Meir Eshel in 1964 – Absalon would later name himself after King David's youngest, rebellious son – he quit the Israeli army to live in a wooden shack by the sea and read philosophy (yes, Nietzsche!). He came to Paris in 1987, enjoying the privileged company and support of his uncle Jacques Ohayon, a 'ferocious, smiling dandy', in one commentator's words, and Absalon's ticket into the Parisian artworld.

That is one, extremely condensed, part of the story. Then there is an aesthetically and conceptually extraordinarily consistent body of work. The show's earliest piece is *Sisyphos* (1986), a small brownish Giacometti-esque existential parable, a fragile, rudimentary figurine that is the alien in an otherwise colourless and abstract cosmos of geometric forms, probing their places and radius of activity. The exhibition displays reductionist interventions (untitled gouaches on pages of interior design magazines from 1987 and 1988) and dwells upon sculptural installations such as *Disposition* (1990), a 40-part floor piece of different roundish or rectangular shapes, in Absalon's trademark white. There is something toylike about Absalon's sculptures, and maybe his multishaped *Cellules* (1991) look so inviting, so inhabitable, even though populated by an array of geometric bodies, because you only encounter them after seeing Absalon's most famous work, his housing structures, the six *Cellules (Prototypes)* (1992).

These dwellings were to serve as Absalon's personal homes in major cities and owe a lot to Bauhaus architecture in Tel Aviv and elsewhere – especially to Le Corbusier, and particularly his Cabanon in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin. Absalon's stark white living spaces of about eight square metres include only the necessary: kitchen unit, sanitary cell, table, bookshelf and bed. Their layout was determined by the artist's activities and movements, in the most rigid, minimal way. Restraint and reduction are the overriding principles, yet these living units come with a high degree of freedom and mobility – cheap to build and maintain, demanding only a small lot of land, they cater for a nomadic existence and certainly a liberated mind. You can't fit a life into these tiny homes if you don't give up many a possession or habit. And it is this modesty that makes these huts so appealing today. They are pragmatic proposals for overpopulated cities, for overcrowded lives, yet they were not designed with messianic thoughts in mind. If Modernism had anything to promise, Absalon gratefully accepted, on a purely personal basis. He wasn't expecting anyone else to do so.

Though probably unintentional, this political agenda reflects back upon Absalon's purely formal works, which suddenly all look like sketches or test pieces for the architectural works they preceded. It is hard to resist the allure of this very carefully curated show once you have fallen in love with these cabins. Moreover, there is something historic and conclusive about this show, which, as the most comprehensive to date, might as well be the last: it's not as if anything new is going to be added in the future. It sits perfectly in KW's cool white premises; and more important, what else could you add? So the mythologisation continues. Never mind. But the work doesn't need it. *Astrid Mania*



Absalon, 2010 (installation view). Photo: Uwe Walter.
Courtesy KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin



The processes involved in producing an artwork and those in a manufactured object are closest in the multiple. The distinguishing and often overlooked factor is the creative individuality that accompanies each numbered artwork that the artist has chosen to produce (or, most likely, has had produced). Galleria Ugo Ferranti – a stone's throw from Rome's Tiber – devoted its final show of 2010 to multiple artworks made in two and three dimensions, a worthwhile undertaking at a time when art rivals fine wine as one of the few stable investment opportunities: numbered works of an edition being the purchase of choice for those entering the market. Not that these works – from the gallerist's permanent collection – are for sale. Rather, the very consideration of the widely differing multiple works in *L'Art Reproduit* invites the viewer to go beyond the mere consideration of individual works re their salability and transportability. If there is such a beyond.

Christian Boltanski's *Les Concessions* (1996), an edition of eight photos originally displayed individually draped behind black cloths, which the public were invited to draw back, depicts the faces of dead and mutilated corpses taken from a real-life Spanish crime magazine. The massacred are here presented in multiple as a group of objects among others. Yet here the acute morbidity of Boltanski's work, reflecting the complicity of print with the mechanical objectification of the world at large, rubs up against a more playful/eclectic facet of serial production. Maurizio Cattelan's *The Wrong Gallery* (2005) is a 1:6 scale model of the real Wrong Gallery doorway: a standard-dimension glass doorway, which between 2002 and 2005 comprised the full extent of the smallest art space in the world. The piece features miniature artworks by artists such as Lawrence Weiner and Elizabeth Peyton, which can be alternated by its owner and inserted behind its miniature glass door. Anyone can be a gallerist.

Like Damien Hirst's *Deckchair* (2008), produced in an unlimited edition and available in six colours, Cattelan's piece can be bought online, partaking in a world in which choice is king. You might want *Deckchair*, or you might prefer *The Wrong Gallery*, though why not play with the latter from the comfort of the former? This, though, is to speak only of recent times, and *L'Art Reproduit* also displays works that yield less to the viewer or owner. Man Ray's *Cadeau* (1921/74), comprising an old flat iron with metal spikes attached to its base, and Fontana's elliptical gashes into an etched print – *Incisione Bianca* (1967) – give parlance to an age of barely concealed male angst, as forbidding as it is blatant in its 'subconscious' message. If, then, *L'Art Reproduit* takes a look at the multiple as genre, asking 'what's in a number?', the variety on show leaves one walking away comfortably assured that, formally speaking, art resists the market's tendency towards uniformity. *Mike Watson*

Galleria Ugo Ferranti, Rome
30 November – 25 January

L'Art Reproduit

Even if you're one of those unhappy ballerinas decrying the gross depiction of their craft in Darren Aronofsky's film *Black Swan* (2010), you'll not find me complaining about Michael Cunningham (author of *The Hours*, 1998) and his ability to conjure forth many of the realities of working in the artworld (there's no other word for what this book describes) in his latest novel. As a portrait of the discontentment of a contemporary art dealer, the novel satisfies and depresses me enough to seem as though it deals in the real; it is well-researched (gallerist Jack Shainman and art advisor Joe Sheftel acted as artistic consultants) and populated by people who discuss Agnes Martin, Brice Marden and Robert Gober rather than more regularly deployed art stars.

The narrative follows New York dealer Peter Harris through a few days of crisis brought about by the arrival of his wife's much younger brother, Mizzy. The latter (whose name is short for 'the Mistake') is a drifter and a drug addict with whom Peter, seeing in the boy something like 'beauty itself', becomes infatuated. This overwhelming yet demure – almost sexless – desire on the part of the usually straight Peter comes at a moment in which he has begun to question his place as a middleman for art, having failed to find anything that has beauty to this dangerous, luxurious degree.

By Nightfall

Peter's problem is essentially this: he has been waiting all his life for an experience of beauty to rival the one he had as a teenager, watching Matthew, his gay older brother, paddling in Lake Michigan with Matthew's close friend (and object of Peter's desire) Joanne. Both were in the prime of youth; Joanne's cantaloupe-coloured bikini blazing against the backdrop of a milky-mist sky, an image that Cunningham describes with vivid clarity and emotion. Matthew, we learn, has since died of AIDS. Peter's failure to find anything to match this in art makes his 'dealerspeak' ('I'm a fan of your work', 'It's a great piece', 'It looks amazing'), which we are party to via his phone calls, texts and emails, hard to bear. In part this is because it is obvious that Peter himself is cringing each time he has to offer up another platitude about art.

If *The Hours* centred on the search for a kind of elusive, remembered happiness, it is beauty that is this novel's precious, fugitive quality. Indeed, the novel's epigraph, borrowed from Rilke, says it all: 'Beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror'. Ultimately, while *By Nightfall* does have moments of its own beauty, it is a little underwhelming, perhaps because it is a rather narrowly focused novel about the compromises involved in the marriage of art and business. And these are not of the grand and tragic kind, but of the slow, everyday kind that would break anyone's heart if she thought about them for too long. *Laura McLean-Ferris*



By Michael Cunningham
4th Estate, £16.99 (hardcover)



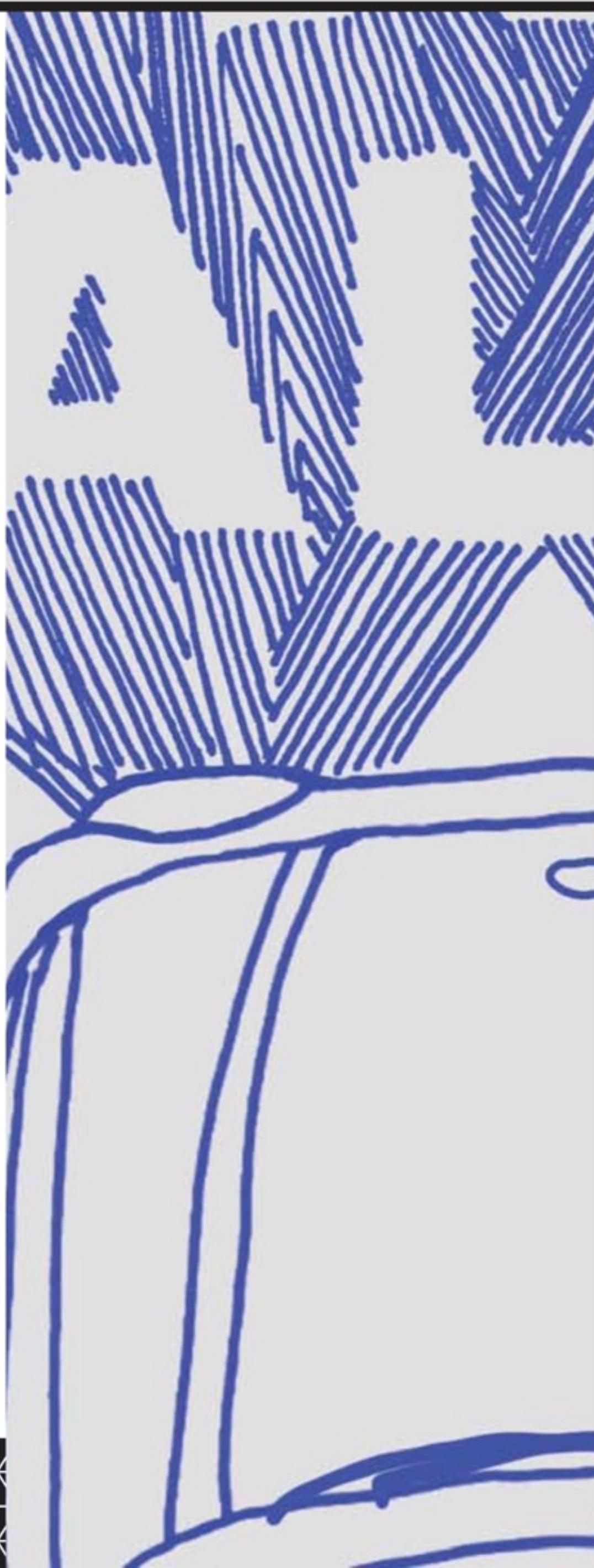
W O\ g] \ s marks the total fusion of art and (deliberate) entertainment, it's actor, director, screenwriter, artist and now novelist James Franco, whose apparently leisurely shift from the gossip pages to the gallery spaces is by equal measures admirable and irritating. On the one hand there's no denying that Franco is an accomplished actor, a pretty model and, on the evidence of his masterful collaboration with the artist Carter on the film *Erased James Franco* (2009) (and to a lesser extent the videos he makes for *Funny or Die*), someone with an intelligent and at times critical self-awareness of the role a character like James Franco plays in culture today. On the other hand, it's easy to argue that Franco embodies what Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer scornfully termed 'the culture industry', exploiting a celebrity and popularity manufactured by the entertainment industry (low culture; as I write, and as his new film is released, there's some sort of buzz about the existence of a James Franco sex tape) to peddle his artistic efforts in the field of fine art (high culture; if there are sex videos, we're supposed to be provoked, but not aroused) and, in doing so, causing the uncomfortable sensation that there is no difference between the industrial production of the mainstream film industry and the pretensions of an anticapitalist, independent, 'special' sphere of art.

Palo Alto

By James Franco
Faber and Faber, £12.99 (softcover)

A collection of short stories as much as a novel (and if there's a general criticism to be made here, it's that the book is neither one nor the other, and consequently a little formless), *Palo Alto* (the San Francisco Bay Area city in which the author grew up) tracks a loose group of adolescent schoolkids as they come to terms with adulthood and boredom via alcoholism, racism, pimping, raping and murdering. Similar themes, then, to those explored in the author's first solo art exhibition, *The Dangerous Book Four Boys*, seen at New York's Clocktower Gallery last summer and opening at Peres Projects, Berlin, a week or so before you read this. Franco's skill is not necessarily in the writing itself – there's a certain monotony to each story's pounding first-person narrative (although this does provide an entertaining, if irrelevant, corollary to the stereotype of the needy, egotistical 'me, me, me' actor) – but in the way he normalises, primarily through the deployment of that first-person narrative, his protagonists' slide into activities (drinking, masturbating, gun-toting, enforced sitophilia) that are at best antisocial, and yet nevertheless serve as markers, along with the consequent community-service orders, of their emergence into adult society. On the flipside, that normalisation comes at the price of rendering each character pretty much the same. Although you could equally imagine modern-day Adornos and Horkheimers issuing a Teutonic tweet to say 'Yes! That's precisely what the homogenised Hollywood "culture" bombardment has done to youth today'.

While Franco prefaces his work with an extract from Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913–27) that describes adolescence as a zone of regret, both because we desire to erase embarrassing youthful actions and because we mourn the fact that, as adults, we're no longer so free to commit actions we might regret, *Palo Alto* probably owes a greater debt to more recent writing about social alienation and suppressed emotional dysfunction as pioneered by writers like Bret Easton Ellis and Jay McInerney in the US and Peter Handke or Michel Houellebecq in Europe. And while Franco the novelist isn't at their level yet, *Palo Alto* contains impressive hints that greater things are to come. Which is annoying, really. After all, what does it say about progress when in the twenty-first century we can sit here praising a Renaissance man? *Mark Rappolt*



Ob' or wwww ozwb [wvb aog that if you want a book reviewed, you pass it over to a book reviewer. But architect and theorist Markus Miessen is a radical. And so his *Nightmare of Participation*, a wayward and scattershot collection of essays on architecture and democracy, includes its very own critical review as an appendix. Does that mean that this reviewer is now out of a job? Fortunately Miessen's editorial conceit merely illustrates the slippery project of his critical investigation – how to rethink the notion of conflict, disagreement and democracy in an age when free-market liberalism has perfected the politics of consensus building, inclusiveness and participation as a way of neutralising the real political divisions in late-capitalist society.

Like many critically minded young cultural thinkers, Miessen is suspicious of the rise and rise of 'participation' as an unassailable political and cultural dogma. And he is clearly aware of how, in the era of 'third way' politics, the political elites are desperate to include us, draw us in for focus groups and consultations, divert us from contesting or challenging the unalterable, neoliberal, free-market order of things.

Such smothering, falsely inclusive strategies have their parallels in art and architecture; in the trend for 'socially engaged' art, which draws the plebs into artwork so that they feel better about themselves and don't misbehave; and in architecture, where participation means consulting and offering each stakeholder a sense of ownership in a project, while making sure this only happens within the immovable constraints of the state's policies and the market.

The Nightmare of Participation

Markus M

By Markus Miessen

Sternberg Press, £20/\$29.95/€22 (hardcover)

For Miessen, the architectural profession has all but surrendered any authority it once had – 'many contemporary architects have succumbed to a position in which they are limited to just delivering form... reduced to the one who places ornamental cherries on the top of the finished cake'. He traces a breakdown in the confidence of architectural thinking back to the 1997 inauguration of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. Gehry and other 'starchitects', he suggests, are 'a generation that set out to be part of an avant-garde and ended up as high-brow, copy-paste establishment'.

Faced with this, Miessen attempts to theorise a practice of the 'uninterested outsider' – an individual who can '[enter] the arena with nothing but creative intellect and the will to provoke change'. This is, of course, self-serving, and Miessen is clearly nervous about dwelling upon it.

The problem is that because he has given up, both on the profession of architecture and on 'the people', he cannot formulate a concept of the independent intellectual who might, through inspiring a wider public discussion about the possibilities of architecture, lead both public and profession to confront those market and state powers that currently constrain a more dynamic architecture and urbanism.

Miessen doesn't think much of democracy, a system in which the public are a bunch of dupes easily led by right-wing demagogues. Citing the recent Swiss referendum on the banning of minarets, he writes that 'the dilemma with democracy is that, the moment you have a room full of idiots, they will vote for an idiotic government'. And yet, when interviewing his political idol and mentor, the massively overrated left-wing theorist Chantal Mouffe, Miessen lets pass all kinds of reactionary drivel without a blink: Europe should close its borders to immigrants; people in the West have to 'abandon [their] cravings for cheaper and cheaper goods'.

Such apparent contempt for people absolves self-appointed intellectuals like Miessen of the hard work of winning over the public. Miessen would prefer a sort of enlightened despotism, and muses approvingly on the extraordinary recent urbanisation of Dubai: 'Based on a relentless belief in architecture as the tool for modernization, the spatial ambitions of Sheikh Al Maktoum are exhilarating', he writes. And indeed they are, but it is the notion that democracies cannot produce an equal dynamism because of the 'obstacle' of democracy that is itself less than exhilarating. Perhaps, for Miessen, the 'nightmare of participation' is the fact that inspiring society with one's ideas is a much harder job, and a much greater project, than theorising one's own self-affirming marginality. J.J. Charlesworth

IT'S APT that Alec Soth's surname – as a reprinted blog post in these pages informs us – rhymes with 'both'. The forty-one-year-old Minnesotan photographer, who's now reached the point of midcareer surveys accompanied by generous, essay-laden, sharply designed books like this one, has evidently always fought shy of foreclosing his creative options. In the numerous America-traversing series he's spun out since *Sleeping by the Mississippi* (1999–2002), the result of a four-year improvisational trek downriver, photographing locals and broken-down beds and highway-hugging graveyards as he went, Soth has toggled between styles: pleased-to-meet-you portraiture in the style of his tutor Joel Sternfeld, Walker Evans-indebted aesthetic sociology, the warm-toned vernacular curiosity of William Eggleston and Stephen Shore, New *Topographics* architectural exactitude, samizdat bookmaking like the voyeuristic yet tender inserted freebie here, *The Loneliest Man in Missouri* – whatever suits, really. A star turn when presented as an artist in the 2004 Whitney Biennial, he's also a globe-girdling photojournalist for Magnum, an agency he joined because, his reprinted application statement says, 'I could easily see myself holing up in Nova Scotia scribbling hermetic diary notes on old pictures and thinking it is great art.' (Because one Robert Frank is enough, and Frank redux isn't enough for Soth.) In a word: restless.

As are the Americans Soth photographs, but the transmissible heartache in his art descends from the fact that they also want to be rooted. That's the stem-twisting American character, as flickeringly illuminated here. The series *NIAGARA* (2004–5), another fluid deployment of waterway as metaphor, saw Soth heading to the famous borderland falls with the impermanence of romantic love as his loose organising principle. It ranges through displaced couples holed up naked and hugging in hotel rooms, dozens of failed marriages compressed into the rack of wedding rings in *Gus's Pawn Shop* (2005), a handwritten sign advertising 'Joy's Divorce Party' beneath a clock and a softcore calendar, touchingly tragic love letters, etc. (Soth, who in an interview confesses to having stolen Turkish stamps from Eggleston and college yearbooks from abused children, has proper artistic ruthlessness; despite this, he comes across as a decent guy.)

From Here to There: Alec Soth's America

Walker Art Center, \$60

The patent risk of his art is that it shoots past melancholy into outright sentimentality, and occasionally – as in *Single Goth Seeks Same* (2009), with its pasty girls looking moonstruck in cafés or pictured plump and nude, mascara running – it does. The fault with Soth's goths, assumedly, is that he knew what he was doing when he got into the subject and is mostly filling in, whereas a series like the superb *Broken Manual* (1998–2010) carries the authentic haywire crackle of discovery. In this case, Soth went after people who'd gone off-grid in America: hermits, cave-dwellers, an old man whose parents had bought him a cheap mountain and who now shares it with a lost young man seen ankle-deep in a pool, a swastika on his arm. ('So clearly a case of him being totally naïve', says Soth.) Striking images abound amid the beards: a rail strung with empty coat hangers in a nook inside a chalk-white cave, the forested view from the Unabomber's cabin, a spectral, shrouded *Roman, the Nocturnal Hermit* (2006).

Here's the frontier spirit, indivisible from loneliness and the impossibility, today, of authentic escape. (Soth: 'Everyone says, "how do you find hermits?" And the answer is: on the Internet.') In instances like *Broken Manual*, his synthetic updating of Mark Twain, Henry David Thoreau and a bequest of photographic traditions snaps into place in a succinct evocation of the national psyche. When it does, this book's underlying claim – that Soth is this generation's heir to Evans, Frank, Eggleston and the Richard Avedon of *In the American West* (1979–84) – rings clear and true. *Martin Herbert*

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THE LONELIEST

OFF IN RAPID CITY, HOW
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RK FOUNTAINS, CHOOSIN
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LY" BUT "REMOTE"? HOW
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LOVED BY MILLIONS . . .

GLOVES

A VIGNETTE FROM YSTOV



STOVIANS WERE
REKNOWNED FOR THEIR
ABSENCE OF MIND, AND
THE MISPLACING OF GLOVES
WAS A COMMON QUIRK.

IT WAS EXPLOITED IN THE WINTER BY THE
STREET KIDS, WHO SCAVENGED FOR THESE
DISCARDED NECESSITIES

AND TRADED THEM FOR SOUP
OR ROASTED CHESTNUTS.



THEY KNEW KEY SPOTS TO FIND THEM -
THE TRAMS WHERE GLOVES HAD BEEN SHED
AND FORGOTTEN IN THE RUMMAGE FOR TICKETS



OR IN THE FRUIT STALLS ON TAMARISK UTT,
WHERE BARE FINGERS WERE NEEDED TO
CHECK FOR RIPENESS.



THE BEST QUALITY GLOVES WERE FOUND
ON MOUNT PASHUT, LEFT BY TOURISTS
AS THEY FOCUSED BINOCULARS
AND ADJUSTED SHUTTER SPEEDS.



WITH THESE THE BOYS TREATED THEMSELVES:
A BAG OF SWEETCAKES



AND A LATE FILM AT ZHEVKET'S.

ON THE TOWN:

13 January

Ricky Swallow at Stuart Shave/Modern Art,
London

photography IAN PIERCE

- 1 IBID Projects's Tobias Wagner and Modern Art's Stuart Shave
- 2 Artist Katy Moran
- 3 Time Out's Ossian Ward, the Serpentine Gallery's Hans Ulrich Obrist and Julia Peyton-Jones, and curator Jasper Sharp
- 4 Artist Ricky Swallow
- 5 Artist Daniel Lipp, Southard Reid's Phillida Reid and David Southard, and artist Oliver Robb
- 6 Modern Art's Ryan Moore and gallerist Phillida Reid
- 7 Artist David Noonan



2 December

Chicks on Speed at Kate MacGarry,
London

photography KATIE BRUCE

- A** Artist Goshka Macuga, designer Maitland Woodall-Mason and artist Caragh Thuring
- B** Artists Peter McDonald and Ben Rivers
- C** Artists Luke Kemp and Ben Rivers, and Kate MacGarry's Jessika Green
- D** Photographer Marcus Tomlinson and Chicks on Speed's Alex Murray-Leslie
- E** Chicks on Speed's Anat Ben-David
- F** Gallerist Fred Mann
- G** Chicks on Speed's Melissa Logan (left) and Alex Murray-Leslie (right) and friend
- H** Artists Pil and Galia Kollectiv
- I** Publishers Edward and Julia Booth-Clibborn
- J** Curator Kit Hammonds



Subject: off the record
Date: Monday, February 7, 2011 17:17
From: gallerygirl@artreview.com
To: <office@artreview.com>
Conversation: off the record

It's been three hard years working for the powers-that-be at *ArtReview* Towers. Three years of playing hooky from the gallery to make it to the legendary Friday brainstorms. Three years of heated, febrile and occasionally tearful debates about the state of art criticism with the highly strung writers who churn out the features. All this and not one fucking freebie. Then one Marchesa knife-pleated metallic silk-organza dress, a few Jägerbombs and an impromptu rendering of the sprinkler dance with the magazine's lawyer at the Christmas party, and suddenly the hunky editor wanted me to check out two art fairs in the space of one month. "Hey, GG", he drawled early one January morning, wearing just a pair of stripy Uniqlo long johns – his bare, perfectly waxed chest signifying that cold meant nothing to him. "Your sprinkler dance got me thinking – it's time for you to represent the magazine at art fairs."

This was great news. My gallery is hopeless at getting into fairs – we scraped into Zoo the year before it disappeared without a trace, and now my director punctuates his lines of increasingly low-grade chop by dreaming of the waiting list for various satellite fairs around the world. But this, reader – this, I felt, was my time; not only would I be sent to Delhi to visit the India Art Summit, but also into cyberspace to visit the VIP Art Fair.

A tricky conundrum: what to wear for an art fair than takes place entirely online? A couple of collector-friends of mine, Belgian Phil and Big Carl, enthusiastically embraced the Chatroulette convention of sitting in their front rooms bollock-naked, fondling their knackers while staring back at laptop cameras and asking dealers firstly for a 20 percent discount and secondly what they were wearing. For me this was not an option. But, equally, sitting at a cramped desk in the Internet café opposite Forest Hill Overground in my 3.1 Phillip Lim collarless silk shirt and matching silk-crepe harem pants did feel rather strange in mid-January. The whole thing seemed an interesting cross between Second Life and Grindr – and I wish it well. Although some of the dealers seemed a bit sullen by the third day, presumably starved of their usual recompense of good, hard 1970s-style sex with gullible young European curators visiting on 'professional day'.

My trip to India started badly: inexplicably my Emirates first-class ticket with stopover at the Timeless Spa in Dubai's Terminal 3 seemed to have been replaced by an economy seat on a Kingfisher Airlines flight. And mischievously somebody had booked me into the Hotel Krishna Cottage, rated 373rd most popular hotel in Delhi on TripAdvisor. Notwithstanding this practical jokery, I made my way to the art fair wearing my Missoni Mare Bolivar crochet-knit kaftan for that ethnic vibe.

Having rewatched *Slumdog Millionaire* on my 64GB iPad on the cramped plane, I was looking forward to seeing poor young lads jumping into oozing latrines in search of autographs, general chaos and beatings punctuated by some great dance routines. But instead what I found was Hans Ulrich Obrist conducting an interview marathon, and launching a new edition of the delicious periodical *Point d'Ironie*. This was disorientating for a moment but, marching past, I worked myself into the dark beating heart of the art fair. Strange names sprung from the wall plaques, grotesque carvings jutted out from all sides, the weight of the colonial relationship bore down on me, filling me both with guilt and a strange pride in the efficient railway network, and the darkness of E.M. Forster's Marabar Caves pulled me inexorably towards a no-yes-no-yes-no-oh-go-on-then encounter with a wily native. I felt plunged into an all-consuming darkness that could only mean one thing: yes, dear reader, I had stumbled upon the Lisson stand.

GG

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